

THE ROYAL HOUSE OF GREECE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Reminiscences

SPECIAL DUTIES in the Balkans and Near East

Fiction

(under the pen-name Arthur Lee Gould)

AN AIRPLANE IN THE ARABIAN NIGHTS



THE ROYAL HOUSE OF GREECE

By
ARTHUR S. GOULD LEE
Air Vice-Marshal (Retired)



WARD LOCK & CO., LIMITED
LONDON AND MELBOURNE

First published . . . 1948

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN
COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE
AUTHORISED ECONOMY STANDARDS

MADE IN ENGLAND

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY RICHARD CLAY AND COMPANY, LTD.,
BUNGAY, SUFFOLK

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NOTES

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- ii. Photographs opposite the following pages are the copyright of the Author: 208, 209, 224, 225, 240, 241.

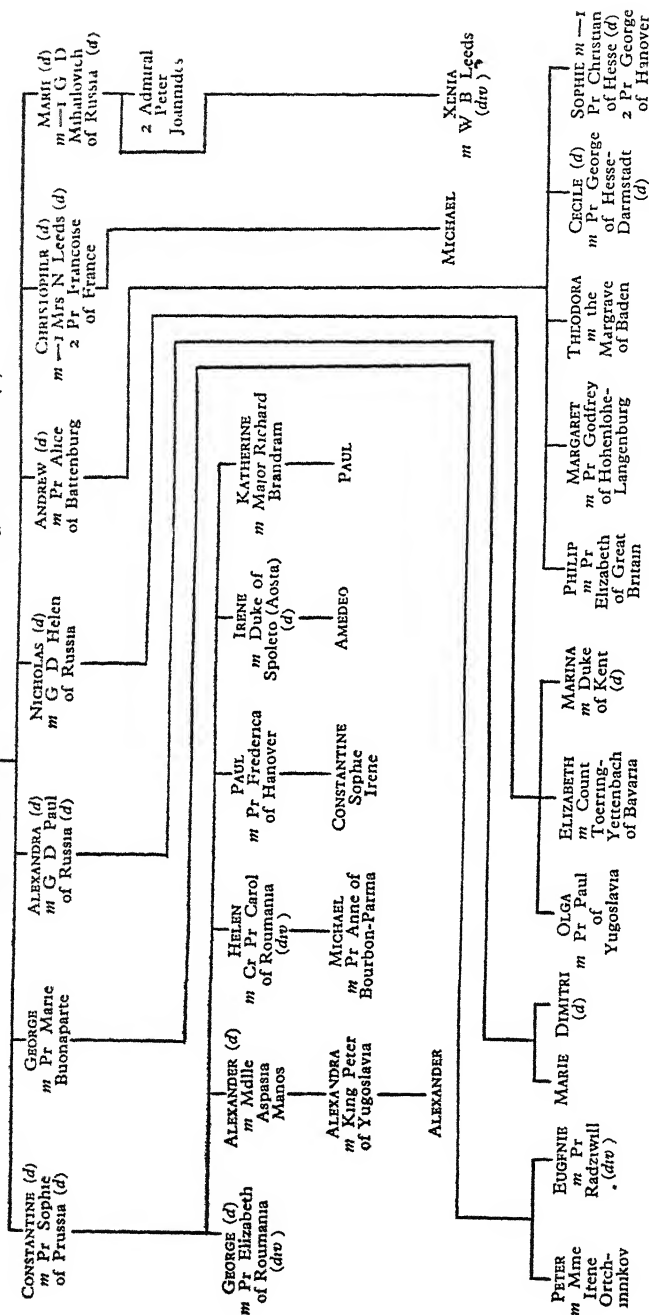
NOTE OF THANKS

THE author expresses his deep indebtedness to those distinguished members of the Greek Royal Dynasty who have facilitated his task in compiling this book. Without their aid the story could not have been written.

To those many others of British, Greek, Roumanian and Yugoslav nationality who have helped him by providing information and photographs, and other assistance, he also tenders his very grateful thanks.

Athens }
London } 1947-8.

KING GEORGE I (d) m G D Olga of Russia (d)



Cr Pr = Crown Prince
Pr = Prince or Princess
G D. = Grand Duke or Duchess

(d) = died
(m) = married
(div) = divorced

GENEALOGICAL TABLE TO THE ROYAL HOUSE OF GREECE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO A DYNASTY

FOR the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, on November 20th, 1947, there came to London a brilliant galaxy of distinguished personages such as the capital had not seen since several years before the war. Among them were representatives of most of the Royal Families of Europe, of whom not the least interesting were those of the dynasty to which Prince Philip belongs—the dynasty which, with one interruption, has occupied the throne of Greece for eighty-five years.

Not since the marriage in Athens in 1938 of the Crown Prince Paul, now King of the Hellenes, to Princess Frederica of Hanover and Great Britain, had so many of this family come together. During the war some were held in enemy countries, while others were dispersed about the globe by the exigencies of exile or service. But now, for this November ceremony, there suddenly assembled, in addition to Queen Frederica and Prince Philip, a King, two Queens, a Prince, four Princesses and two Duchesses, all branches of the Royal House of Greece. The most noteworthy of the few who were not there was the head of the dynasty, King Paul I, who was ill, and in any case unable to leave his troubled country, even for a week.

That one family should contain so many notable people is not rare among the several Royal dynasties of Europe, but there can be few whose members have been so personally involved in world-shaking events, or so dogged by tragedy and vicissitude. For almost every one of those gathered to witness the alliance between a scion of the family and the successor to the throne of Britain had passed through the lowest valleys as well as over the glorious peaks of life.

But there was one figure missing from this reunion, who,

had he been there, would have felt greatly content over the happy event that caused it. This was King George II, holder of the Crown for twenty-two years, who had died suddenly only a few months previously. As I sat in a famous London hotel and saw his sisters and cousins and other relations chatting animatedly together, I thought of that earlier day in Athens when I had first spoken to the King who was destined to become the centre of one of the most bitter episodes in Greek history.

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At about nine o'clock on a moonlit evening of March, 1941, I stood on a broad ledge cut into the upper slopes of Lycabettus, the soaring sugar-cone hill that dominates Athens. From the ledge ran narrow passages, burrowed deep into the rock, where the Greeks had carved the Operations Room of their Air Defence Centre. Around me were other figures, almost indiscernible in the dark shadow cast by the overhanging cliff behind. Not even the glow of a cigarette broke the obscurity as we waited there in silence, Greek and British officers and sentries and drivers, all staring southwards, watching.

In the daytime, from this lofty perch, our vision would have ranged over the matchless Parthenon and the crowded mass of the city, harshly glaring in the brilliant light, towards the untidy suburbs that sprawled to the port of Piraeus, then above and beyond to where, hanging to the line of the horizon like a blue and shimmering curtain, lay the sun-clasped waters of the Saronic Gulf. And at night, had times been normal, we should have looked down steeply, as though from an aeroplane, into the network of brightly-lit squares and streets, with their flashing signs and sparkling shop-windows. Or, by lifting our eyes a little, we should have gazed through the crystal air into the great bowl of twinkling lights that ended abruptly by the sea at Phaleron.

But at this moment not the slightest glimmer showed from beneath, not an escaping gleam from a curtained window, nor even the minute pin-point of a carelessly struck match. For we were looking into the pit of a

blackout that was flawless, except where it was broken, a few miles to the south, not by the friendly lamps of peace, but by the desperate illuminations of war. For what we were all watching so intently were the waving pencils of the searchlights, the quick flash of exploding shrapnel, the tracer pyrotechnics of the anti-aircraft weapons, the succession of yellow-red flashes as sticks of bombs crashed into the area of Piraeus harbour.

The sound of the overlapping reverberations of the exploding bombs and the sharp crack of bursting shells came clearly to us, lifted as we were above all the obstructions between. And so we watched and listened, with the detached and fascinated interest with which war had taught us to see death and destruction rained upon our fellow creatures.

Over our heads sounded the ominous hum of aircraft engines, the rhythmic throb of many German bombers, interrupted sometimes by the eager note of the Blenheim fighters that ascended in scanty relays from the airfield at Elefsis. Occasionally, across the moon-flooded sky, the dark shadow of a plane sped purposefully towards the target, its passage verified by tiny flickers of orange flame from the exhausts. Occasionally, too, we heard above us the faint stutter of machine-guns as a fighter pilot, tensely searching the night sky, found and attacked an enemy bomber.

In the distance, high above Mount Hymettus on our left, a flaming torch appeared suddenly, remained suspended for an instant in the void, then started to slide earthwards. Low exclamations of approval came from the ghostly forms around me. I turned towards my neighbour, whom I had not distinguished when I had come on the ledge, with eyes still unadjusted to the darkness after the dazzle of the Operations Room, and of whose presence I had since been oblivious in my absorption in the scene before me.

"That's one of the blank blanks out of it, anyway!" I declared with satisfaction.

To my surprise a woman's voice answered, unperturbed by my inelegant epithets. I apologised for the slip, and we talked of the intensity of the raid. I wondered at her

being in this closely-guarded place, accessible only to those of high military authority, but before I could devise a question that would not seem too inquisitive, we heard the nearby rattle of machine-guns, and there appeared in front of us, almost it seemed on our level, the criss-cross of tracers from the rear guns of a bomber and the front guns of a pursuing fighter. For some moments the exchange of firing continued as the two aircraft passed across our front, the distance between them lessening rapidly, until abruptly the tracers vanished and the firing stopped. There appeared a small and flickering splash of fire, which after a brief pause burst suddenly into a violent blaze. Then as the craft, illuminated in its own glare, tilted into its death-dive, a parachute flashed into existence just behind the tail of billowing smoke. For a few seconds we saw it apparently stationary, with swaying figure beneath, then, as the fiery mass dropped swiftly to earth, it was lost in the darkness.

There came remotely but clearly a deep exultant roar from the many thousands of Athenians watching in the streets below, cheers that acclaimed the destruction, as they thought, of one of the enemy. But I was not sure. In that momentary glimpse in the flames, I imagined I had seen not a Dornier, but a Blenheim. My thoughts were echoed by words that came from an indistinct figure standing next to the woman.

"I'm afraid they cheer too soon," he said. "Surely the aeroplane that fell was British?"

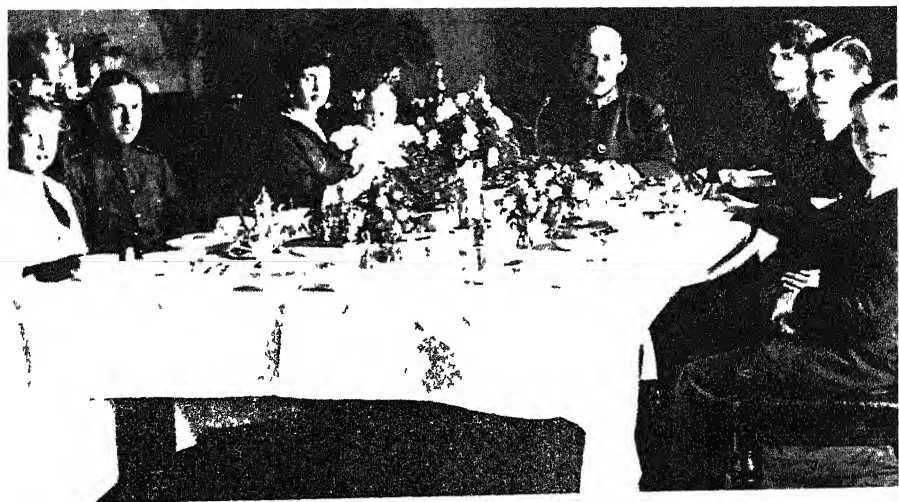
We discussed its shape and agreed that the stricken plane had been a Blenheim. Continuing, we praised the gallantry of the Blenheim fighter crews, poor in numbers, rich in spirit. We talked of the growing intensity of the German air attacks on Piraeus, of the still inadequate anti-aircraft defences, despite the recent arrival of British Army units. The stranger spoke quietly, gravely, but with evident knowledge, and I peered at him, trying to recognise his uniform to discover who he was. Only when the woman addressed him by a Christian name did I realise that he was the King, whom I had watched only a quarter of an hour before inspecting the Operations Room, with its



*H M King George I of
Hellenes, founder of
Dynasty*

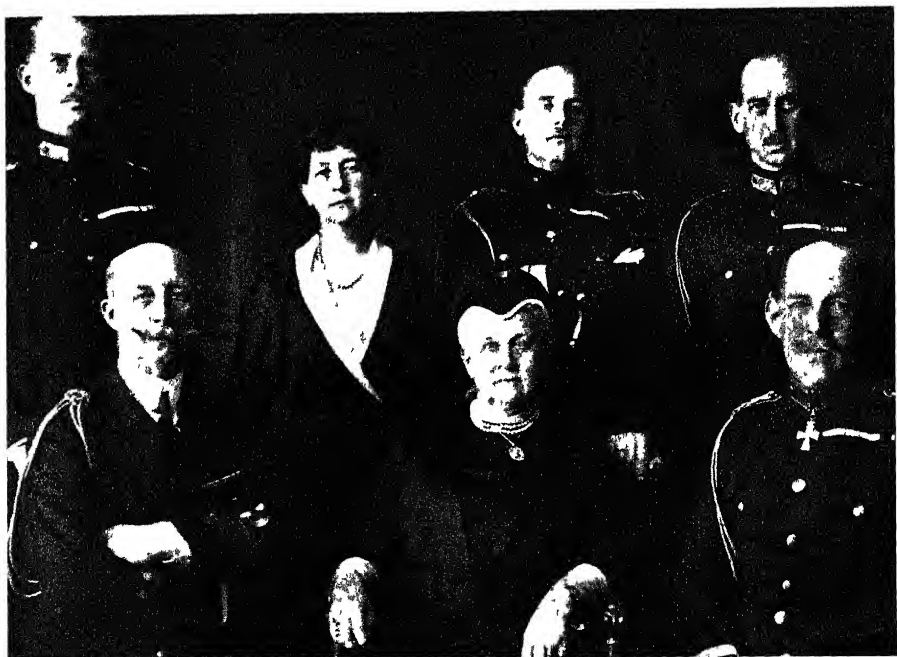
*King George I, followed by Crown Prince Constantine,
entering Salonika after its capture in 1912*





King Constantine's family at table L to R Princess Irene, Crown Prince George, Queen Sophie with Princess Katherine, the King, Princess Helen, Prince Alexander, Prince Paul

The Widowed Queen Olga and her family Seated L to I Prince George, The Queen, King Constantine Standing Prince Andrew, Princess Marie, Prince Christopher and Prince Nicholas



mixed Greek and British personnel. With him were also his sister, Princess Katherine, and his cousin, Prince Peter.

Before he left, we learned that we had been right about the identity of the blazing aeroplane. But the Dornier had also been hit, and had duly crashed well away from the city. We had seen the Blenheim's pilot escape, but the gunner was not so fortunate.

This meeting gave me my first opportunity to speak to King George, although I had often seen him in the Greek Military Headquarters that now occupied most of the Hotel Grande Bretagne. I had seen him also when he visited Elefsis, and more recently when he inspected Piraeus harbour, devastated by an exploding ammunition ship. Tied up for days against a wharf, the ship had eventually been hit by a bomb during an evening raid. A fire had started, which had smouldered for hours, until at last, in the middle of the night, it reached the explosives in the hold. In the morning I had gone with Greek and British officers to see the damage. A pall of smoke lay over the port from still-burning ships and buildings. Great sheds had subsided into a rubble. Cranes and wharf equipment sprawled in tangled heaps. The masts of sunken vessels, large and small, projected from the water. The usual bustle of the harbour was stilled in a kind of crushed, unbelievable stupor. Greeks in the stricken area watched us with grim and accusing faces, because the British had left the ship in harbour instead of unloading it at some smaller port or pier clear of the bombings. It was while we were moving silently round the debris-littered wharves that I had seen King George, accompanied by his brother, the Crown Prince Paul. They, too, were silent, and their mien taut and serious. They knew that this blow would hit hard at the sorely tried Greek morale.

Except for a passing glimpse a few weeks later in Crete, and a brief contact in Cairo in the following year, the encounter on Lycabettus was the last I had with King George for over five years, until, a few weeks before his return to Greece in 1946, I visited him at Claridges in London. But although I did not see much of the King during these years, my path was to cross those of several

of his family. The Crown Prince Paul, a familiar figure at Greek Headquarters in Athens, and his wife, Princess Frederica, were to join unexpectedly in our get-away from Crete. Princess Katherine, the King's sister, I was to see later in Cairo and London. Prince Peter was to be a familiar figure in the Middle East as Chief Liaison Officer to the British. Princess Aspasia, widow of King George's brother, Alexander, and her handsome daughter Alexandra, whom I had met in Athens, were to share in the Crete episode, and also be encountered in Egypt and England.

From Egypt these figures dispersed on their various ways, to South Africa, to England, to the United States. Then they disappeared, and except insofar as my service in Greece had found me many Greek friends and given me a live interest in Greek affairs, there seemed little reason why I should ever renew my contacts with the Greek King or any of his family. But three years later the inscrutable workings of Fate, as implemented in my service career by the actions of the Air Ministry postings branch, brought me into close touch with yet others of the family, for I became a member of the Allied Control Commission in Roumania, where I frequently met the King's sister, Queen Helen, his nephew, King Michael, and his former wife, Princess Elizabeth.

The months passed and the war ended. The tragic tale of fratricidal strife in Greece began. The Communist bands almost seized power, and in their failure butchered many thousands. In Roumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, I had recently seen how the Communist technique operated, and I knew what was in store for the Greeks if they failed to resist the dissensions spread by a foreign ideology. The Greeks knew, too, but they required help and inspiration to continue their struggle. It seemed so obvious that the great majority of the nation needed a stable centre around which they could rally against the danger from the north, and that for the throne to be occupied was the first and only possible solution for their weaknesses.

In 1946, in London, I happened to encounter Colonel Dimitri Levidis, Master of King George's Household, and his close friend for a quarter of a century. He had been

living at Claridges Hotel with the King during this last period of exile. We had met briefly in Athens in 1941, and now, five years later, over our luncheon, we discussed the events that had happened since, and especially those that had affected King George and the members of his family. We recalled how, to practically all of them—brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces—the war had brought hazard, adventure, disaster, achievement, to a degree well beyond the experience of most of us, even in times that had forced unusual excitements into the most cloistered lives.

We spoke of King George and his long career, so full of fluctuations, of adversity alternating with triumph, and of how it seemed certain he would soon be called again to resume the throne. We remembered how Prince Paul had always shared his brother's misfortunes as well as his triumphs. I learned of Princess Frederica's achievements in South Africa for the benefit of Greek welfare, and of Princess Katherine's nursing work in Capetown. I praised Queen Helen's spirited bearing in Roumania, and King Michael's assumption of courageous manhood in overthrowing the pro-Nazi regime.

We discussed King George's other sister, Irene, Duchess of Aosta, and her tribulations at the hands of the German S.S. We talked of the marriage of King George's niece, Princess Alexandra, to King Peter, and of the subsequent abolition of the Yugoslav monarchy by Marshal Tito's Communist Government. Our list was still incomplete. We recalled Prince Peter's long service in the Middle East, and spoke of the King's other cousins—of Prince Philip serving in the Royal Navy; of Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, widowed by an aeroplane accident; of Princess Olga, retiring into unhappy exile with her husband, Prince Paul of Yugoslavia.

I could not refrain from commenting on the capricious way in which Fate had dealt with the principal members of this remarkable dynasty, particularly during the war. Many of them had played a part, sometimes a vital and dramatic part, in the making of history, and yet few of them had found full reward or satisfaction in either their

work or their private lives. Some had been pawns in the unscrupulous play of international politics, others had been crushed by the powerful impact of two world wars. Some had been struck down at the moment when they seemed to have achieved greatness, or even merely happiness. For so many of the family, tragedy had indeed stalked in the footsteps of happiness. Throughout the entire story of the dynasty there seemed to flow a theme of fluctuating extremes of good and ill fortune that had about it something of the inevitability of a Greek tragedy.

As we talked, we realised that this story had never been told, except in part, and then too often inaccurately, or with misrepresentation, in the form of unrelated, piecemeal paragraphs in the Press. We examined the possibilities of a book that should present a coherent account of the family's story, not as a political study, except when politics completely dominated events, but as a picture of a group of individuals born to high places, prominent in public life, and yet subject to the everyday influences that sway all human beings.

King George was consulted on the proposal and approved of it. There were obvious advantages in the family's story being written by one with no label of political bias, and with a personal acquaintance with many of its members that, although fortuitous in its origins, was yet sufficiently informal to permit candidness. The King promised his assistance, and suggested that I should also gain the aid of the Crown Prince. By then Prince Paul had left England on the first stage of the expected return to Greece. I went to Paris and saw him and the Crown Princess. They, too, approved of the suggestion, and invited me to Athens, where I could have access to records and photographs, as well as delve into their personal recollections. The invitation was confirmed after King Paul ascended the throne.

When I started on my task I became aware of certain difficulties. It was not my aim to produce complete chronological records or biographies, nor to confine the tale only to scenes where the players had touched history. And because of the way in which I was to be given help to

compile my material, subjective analysis of character was neither possible nor desirable. Yet I wanted to portray the members of the family, as far as the dignity of their station and the limitations of powder-keg politics permitted, as ordinary men and women, "their blue blood just as red as anybody else's, their tears just as bitter".*

I realised that this course would not be easy, for Royalty may seldom expose their thoughts. From childhood they are imprisoned in the self-restraints of exalted station, from which they may not emerge without risk of disaster. As adults, their every impulsive word may be distorted, their wisest pronouncements viewed with suspicion. And so experience teaches them to withdraw into a detachment that, while it accords rightly with their constitutional role, renders them more than ever liable to be misunderstood, because they can seldom explain their aims, their reasons, their innermost motives.

Nevertheless, I hope in this book to overcome these handicaps, and to show some of the characters as they really are beneath the aloofness and reserves of Royalty and eminence. This will be possible partly because of the fund of incident with which I have been provided, of the kind that so often illuminates character more significantly than the refulgence of great events. Some of these episodes go back many years, into the youth of the subjects. To be able to understand them in their actions during the last decade, it is essential to know something of their past influences, and to have a perspective on the family and its earlier background. More than this, it is necessary to know something of the significance of the monarchy in Greece, and its unique place in the Greek tradition, and also of the volatile Greek character that has so often contributed to the vicissitudes experienced by the dynasty since it was first established on the unsteady throne of Hellas.

* *My Fifty Years*, by Prince Nicholas of Greece.

CHAPTER II

“SO THAT ALL DIVISION . . . SHOULD CEASE AMONG US”

TO-DAY in Greece, King Paul and Queen Frederica reign side by side on a throne that lifts clear of the bitter factions of the past as of the violent passions of the present, like a harbour beacon offering security in a tempestuous night of stormy seas. Behind this modest, gallant pair the people of Greece are united in one desire—to repulse the foreign-inspired menace that threatens to weaken and seize the State. Once more we see how the Greeks, in their direst perils, take refuge in the haven of monarchy, just as they turned to it after the first years of disorder that followed the birth of modern Greece.

In the last thirty-five of the hundred and twenty years that have since passed, King Paul, his father and two brothers have occupied the Greek throne by succession or plebiscite no fewer than seven times—a record that is surely without parallel in the history of any royal dynasty. King Paul himself, three times exiled, refused the crown in 1920. His father twice assumed the crown and then died in exile. His brother George was three times exiled, once as Crown Prince and twice as King, and three times called to the throne, twice by national plebiscite.

The throne became vacant only twice by the natural death of the occupant, and once by assassination. Although the remaining changes were not entirely due to the national inconstancy, for foreign intrigues also played their part, they could never have happened but for certain complexities that lie deep in the Greek character. The Greek State of to-day is of recent origin, but its people—or, more accurately, its leaders—still show the political instability of those forebears who yet gave mankind the first design of civilisation. Even though it was not the memory of

ancient Greece, but the influence of the Byzantine religious tradition as passed on by successions of tenacious priests among their village communities, that kept alive the Greek ideal through four hundred years of obliterating misrule by the Ottoman Turks, yet the ancient characteristics, good and bad, persisted. For when the first stirrings for freedom began to develop, the Greeks were soon to show that long servitude had but deepened the apparently ineradicable defect of the race—the inability to unite voluntarily for the national well-being. As always, the Greek took little pleasure or pride in submitting to what he considered the humiliation of discipline, even though for the highest national purpose.

In 1821 began a nine-year struggle for independence, which the Great Powers at first watched without even sympathetic interest, but finally, at the urge of a public opinion inspired to a large extent by a few notables, such as Byron, decided to support. So was born the Greece of to-day, small in size, strong in spirit, but feeble in influence because the weaknesses of its own sons led it to become, and to remain, a pawn in the political rivalries of its “protectors”, Britain, France and Russia.

Even before freedom was gained, the leaders of the resistance had been at loggerheads with each other. But among these men there were realists, who were honest in acknowledging their own failings. They knew that only a monarchy could give them unity, because a monarchy would stand clear of their sectional quarrels and would also act as a symbolic link with the splendid regime of the old Byzantine Emperors. The *Philike Hetairae*, the celebrated revolutionary organisation that had prepared the way for the 1821 rising, had declared that the Greek race must demand a king “. . . so that all division and rivalry for preference should cease among us”. Thus, when freedom came, the revolutionary leaders sent missions around the Courts of Europe to find a King, but, characteristically, could never agree on a choice.

Meanwhile the infant State, struggling to stand on its feet, suffered from the lack of a strong central authority. In 1827, Count John Capo d'Istria, a native aristocrat who

had played an active part in obtaining Russian support for the revolution, was elected President of the Greek Republic, but his autocratic methods of trying to suppress the feuds that accompanied the ambitions of the country's leaders led four years later to his assassination. A state of anarchy followed. The Powers concluded that long servitude had deprived the Greeks of their "capacities for reasoning like free men", and decided that, as native leaders were rejected, the Greeks should have the monarchy they had originally demanded.

The Crown was offered first to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, later King of the Belgians, who refused it, and then to Prince Otho, whose father, King Ludwig of Bavaria, had shown himself a sincere Philhellene. Less cautious than Leopold, Prince Otho hopefully accepted the throne. The Greeks needed a man of strong character and mature knowledge, but they had chosen an inexperienced boy of seventeen years. He acceded in 1833, supervised by a Regency of three Bavarians, who built up an administration that rested greatly on the help of other Bavarian officials. But although these men brought stability and other benefits, their efforts were not appreciated, for they tried to run the fiery little country as though it were an obedient German principality, and, as was to be expected, made many mistakes. After ten years of Otho's reign, the Greeks staged their first modern revolution, and compelled him to accept a Greek Ministry and to grant a Constitution. This important event is commemorated in the present name of the space in front of the old Royal Palace in Athens, Constitution Square, from which the revolutionaries voiced their demands.

Thus Greece became a Constitutional Monarchy, and for two decades made reasonable progress under Otho's well-meaning, but uninspired rule. He was an earnest idealist, with a deep affection for his country and its people, but he did not understand them, and acquaintance gave him no deeper insight into their character. Nevertheless he devoted his whole life to developing their interests and well-being—an aim that included the acquisition of Greek-populated territories still lying under Turkish rule. During

the Crimean War he thought the moment had arrived to seize the Greek provinces of Thessaly and Epirus, and, amid national enthusiasm, attempted an invasion. Unfortunately he had forgotten the international issues involved. Intervention by the Powers followed, which caused a strong reaction against the Crown, and in 1862 the Greeks, angry and disappointed, staged another revolution and forced Otho to abdicate.

He and his beautiful Queen, Amalia, had given their all to their adopted country, but this was not enough, for in addition to their blunders over Thessaly, they had failed to produce an heir to be brought up in the Orthodox faith. King Otho did not possess the astute, authoritative personality required to rule so mercurial a people. He was, on the contrary, just a good but stupid man. He bore the loss of the Crown with dignified resignation, and although until his death he never understood where he had failed in his thirty years' service to the Greeks, he never complained of their ingratitude. He was not to know that his deposition was only the first of a series of fluctuating reactions that the Greeks were to show to their rulers, of switchings from king to king, monarchy to republic, republic to monarchy.

With the throne empty, the nation at once set about to vote for a new king. The three Protecting Powers put forward several nominees, but the 241,202 citizens who exercised their suffrage spoke with an almost unanimous voice for young Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, second son of Queen Victoria. He was given 230,066 votes, the next most popular prince receiving only 2,400. King Otho's long period of faithful service won for him a solitary vote! It is a misfortune that history is not enriched by the name of this one loyal supporter. Significantly, in the light of events sixty years later, only ninety-three votes were cast for a republic. Their King chosen, his election was enthusiastically celebrated throughout Greece, but these rejoicings were premature, as Britain announced that Prince Alfred was an ineligible choice. The three Protecting Powers had agreed in a Convention of 1832 that members of their reigning houses were to be excluded from the

Greek throne. Why he was nominated at all was a question the Greeks asked in vain.

Some time elapsed while the Powers discussed the choice of a successor, and meanwhile, in Greece, disorder again grew to the borders of anarchy and civil war. Rival factions of the Army fought in the streets of the capital, while indignant Athenians stood shouting outside the British Legation, demanding a new king. For the second time the Greeks showed how innate was their unwillingness to be ruled by anyone who belonged to their own race.

At last the Powers agreed on Great Britain's candidate, the young Prince William George of Glucksberg, second son of Prince, later King, Christian IX of Denmark. This proposal was received with enthusiastic approval by the Greeks, because they knew that Britain's goodwill present would take the form of ceding the Ionian Islands to the Greek motherland, and also because the new King's sister, Alexandra, had recently become engaged to Edward, Prince of Wales, a link which they fondly imagined would ensure them British protection.

The children of King Christian, noted throughout Europe for their good looks, were to share prominently in the European regal structure of the next half-century, but they were also to come under the shadow of misfortune that fell upon so many of those directly and indirectly linked with the Greek throne. Prince William's sister, Princess Dagmar, was one who was to plumb tragedy to its depths. She and the Tsarevich Nicholas fell deeply in love, but before they could be married, he developed spinal trouble as a result of a heavy fall whilst wrestling. On his deathbed he called Dagmar and his brother Alexander to his side, and asked them to marry. So in 1866 Princess Dagmar embraced the Orthodox Church and became Marie Feodorovna, the bride of the Tsarevich Alexander, who on his father's assassination in 1881 ascended the throne as the Emperor Alexander the Third. As Empress of Russia, Dagmar reigned for thirteen years over the most magnificently regal and autocratic Court in Europe. Then, after her husband died, for twenty-five years she watched her successor, her son the Tsar Nicholas's wife, and formerly

the Grand Duchess Alice of Hesse, helping Russia to drift towards her tragic destiny. Fifty-three years after Princess Dagmar entered Russia to be Alexander's wife, she left it as a refugee in a British warship, having endured the terrors and privations of the revolution and the agony of knowing that her son, the Tsar, and his wife and family had been mercilessly butchered by the Bolsheviks.

The Prince's second sister, Alexandra, when Princess of Wales, was also to suffer disappointment and tragedy, and in the death of her eldest son, the Duke of Clarence, she was to see the story of her sister Dagmar strangely repeated. In December, 1891, the Duke's betrothal was announced to Princess Mary of Teck, but a few weeks later, while the country was still acclaiming the event with enthusiasm, the bridegroom-elect fell ill and died. His brother George's sympathy for Princess Mary led to a love match that resulted in their betrothal and marriage in 1893. Princess Alexandra had been married in 1863, but did not become Queen until 1901. Her sovereignty was short, as King Edward died nine years later. Ascending the throne, Queen Mary shared with King George an eventful reign of a quarter of a century.

Princess Thyra, the third sister of Prince William, married in 1878 Ernest Augustus, third Duke of Cumberland, and son of the last King of Hanover. The sovereigns of England were rulers of Hanover until 1837, when, because Queen Victoria was excluded from the succession by the Salic Law, the nearest male heir, the Duke of Cumberland, became the King, thus separating the Crowns of Britain and Hanover after a union of 123 years. In 1866, his blind son, King George, was deposed and his Kingdom annexed by Prussia. King George's son, Princess Thyra's husband, resumed the old title of Cumberland. The Duchess Thyra and the other members of King Christian's family had thus good reasons for the anti-Prussian feelings which they afterwards never attempted to disguise. The story of the accidental death of the Duchess's eldest son, and the unexpected romance that followed, is told later, in the chapter on her grand-daughter, Queen Frederica of Greece.

But to return to the Greece of 1863: Political differences quietened down as soon as Prince William ascended the throne as George I, King of the Hellenes. The title was significant. He was King not merely of Greece, but of all those of the Greek nation who still lived under alien rule. He was then a lively, straightforward boy of eighteen, whose upbringing had been simple and without instruction in kingship. He had no advisers, other than the Greek politicians who had recently broken their oath to Otho, and many of whom were soon engaged in trying to exploit the young monarch for their own political ends. But George, who, in contrast with Otho, possessed both astuteness and charm, let his Ministers understand that, in the jesting words of King Leopold of Belgium, he always "kept a portmanteau ready packed", and was prepared to leave the moment he felt they did not want him. Greek kings have needed that metaphorical portmanteau ever since!

That King Leopold had not lost his early pessimism on the prospects of the monarchy in Greece had been shown a few months before in a letter to Queen Victoria, in which he discussed the possibility of Prince Alfred becoming King. "The task will be a very difficult one," he wrote, "especially as a Constitutional Monarchy. A Dictator would be more likely to succeed." How often since could he have claimed that his doubts had been justified!

Young as was King George, the country made rapid advance under the stabilising influence of his presence. For the first four years he never left Greece, spending all his time travelling round the country, mixing freely with all classes, and learning the language. Then his councillors urged that an even greater feeling of security would follow the determination of the succession. In 1867 he married the sixteen-year-old Grand Duchess Olga, daughter of the Tsar's brother, the Grand Duke Constantine. He visited Russia to find a wife, and eventually selected the demure little Duchess, still in the schoolroom, whom he saw by chance when visiting her parents. "A few months later they were married. The bride was such a child that she brought a whole family of dolls with her to her new country. For

the entry into Athens* she wore a little dress in the Greek colours of blue and white, and the crowds in the streets shouted themselves hoarse in welcome. Her shy youth and beauty conquered their impressionable hearts that day and, through all the vicissitudes of our house, she at least never lost their love.” *

Queen Olga’s first child, a boy, was born in 1868. The whole nation demanded that he should bear the name of Constantine, the last Emperor of Byzantine Greece, as a symbol of the links with the splendid past as well as of the hopes for the future. The news that a Prince Constantine had been born on the sacred soil of Greece reached the most remote Greek communities, and was received with mystic belief as a sign that the unity and destiny of their race was at last to be achieved.

Other children followed, and within a few years the Greeks were happy in possessing a whole native-born family—five princes, Constantine, George, Nicholas, Andrew and Christopher, and two princesses, Alexandra and Marie. Another daughter, Olga, born in 1881, died the same year. All the Queen’s children, and later her grandchildren, were brought up in her faith, the Greek Orthodox Church, but King George remained always a Protestant.

The family led a quiet, healthy life in country surroundings at Tatoi, at the foot of Mount Parnes, in the wooded estate which the King bought privately in 1871. Here, in gardens laid out to provide the typical charms of both the Greek and English countryside, he built a mansion with a magnificent view across the Athens plain to the Saronic Gulf. In this friendly, rambling place, contrasting so pleasantly with the uncomfortable, old-fashioned Palace in Athens, which lacked even such necessities as bathrooms, the family flourished in a homely and intimate atmosphere. In his memoirs many years later, Prince Nicholas wrote of Tatoi during this period as the place that had given him his happiest recollections of life as child and man: “. . . our real home, where everybody was free to do as he liked”.

Prince Christopher wrote,* too, of Tatoi, that it was the one place where “we could forget that we were not

* *Memoirs*, by Prince Christopher of Greece.

supposed to be ordinary human beings". He described the Athens Palace as "excessively uncomfortable. There was only one bathroom in the whole place, and no one had ever been known to take a bath in it, for the simple reason that the taps would scarcely ever run and, on the rare occasions when they could be coaxed into doing so, emitted a thin trickle of water in which the corpses of defunct roaches and other strange animals floated dismally. . . . The cold of the Palace was almost unbearable. The wind whistled down the corridors and curled like a lash in and out of the lofty salons." The Palace was inadequately heated by porcelain stoves, and lighted by oil lamps that smelt and smoked. Nevertheless the growing family found amusement in its forgotten corners as in its vastness. The enormous ballroom that ran the whole length of the building was useful on wet days for roller-skating and cycling, in which the King himself would join. "My father, although he was habitually strict enough to keep us all in awe of him, was the best of playfellows and could generally be persuaded to lead the procession, winding in and out among the pillars, and after him would come the whole family in order of seniority—I bringing up the rear. We would start off in stately fashion until, often as not, we smashed into one another and came to earth in a tangled heap, some of us shrieking with laughter, others with the pain of bruises."

The ballroom was, however, used for occasions other than indoor exercises, for the King and Queen periodically indulged in Court balls that became outbursts of wide hospitality. King George had no love for a rigid Court etiquette, and these Palace functions were very democratic affairs, at which all levels of society might meet, for the King and Queen did not confine their contacts to a narrow circle of the upper classes. Unlike Otho, King George set the roots of his dynasty deep in the life of the ordinary Greek people. He had, at the beginning of his reign, adopted as the symbol of the new dynasty the motto, "My strength is in the love of my people", and he never ceased actively to try to earn and retain that affection. He liked mingling with his subjects, visiting them in their

villages, talking to them informally, and inviting them to his home. On his birthday, and on the Queen's, a score of sheep were roasted on spits at Tatoi, and served on the lawns to peasants of the district, who assembled in their traditional costumes and drank the King's health in wine from the Tatoi vineyards.

However, it was not the peasant who ran the country, but the politician. In spite of universal regard for the King, and in spite of the services that he rendered throughout his long reign, he suffered many setbacks, many humiliations, many touch-and-go disagreements. He admitted that, in his earlier days particularly, he often felt that he was living on top of a volcano. There were, too, not a few “portmanteau” occasions when the Royal Family waited, with bags packed, ready to leave the country in a British warship. One of these incidents occurred in 1909, when the Military League forced the Princes to resign their commissions in the Army.

But the moment for leaving never came. The King's family grew up, and all were duly married. In 1889, Constantine, the Diadoch, or Successor, who also bore the title of the Duke of Sparta, married Princess Sophie Dorothea of Hohenzollern, sister of Kaiser Wilhelm, and granddaughter of Queen Victoria. It is with the lives of their children that this book is mainly concerned, especially that of their first son, George. Their second son, Alexander, was followed by a daughter, Helen, and then by Paul and Irene, and finally, Katherine.

The King's eldest daughter, Alexandra, married the Grand Duke Paul of Russia in 1889. A daughter, Marie, was born, but three years after the wedding the Duchess died, immediately after the birth of her son, Dimitri. Prince Constantine's brother, Nicholas, married in 1902 the Grand Duchess Helen of Russia, one of their daughters being Marina, Duchess of Kent. Next was Prince Andrew, who in 1903 married the British Princess Alice of Battenberg, and whose family included Prince Philip, afterwards the Duke of Edinburgh. In 1908 Prince George married Princess Marie Bonaparte, descendant of Lucien, brother of Napoleon; and their son Peter, by service in

war, forged yet another link with Britain. The last son, Christopher, married in 1920 Mrs. Nancy Leeds, a wealthy American, who died a few years later. In 1929 he married Princess Françoise of France, sister of the Count of Paris. The second daughter, Princess Marie, married the Grand Duke Mihailovich of Russia.

Surely few mothers can have faced such a family Tower of Babel as Queen Olga, each of whose five daughters-in-law was of different nationality, language and religion—German, French, Russian, British and American. Yet such was her persuasive charm that the strongest bonds of friendship and sympathy prevailed among them. This was the period when King George's family were united in their mutual affections, because they were living together in a Greece where for fifty years no violent upheavals, national or international, had ruffled the comparatively smooth surface of everyday affairs. But soon this period of happy understanding was to end. Most of the family were to suffer misfortune, and all were to be scattered in a succession of exiles. Those who had passed only an early childhood in Greece were to be brought up abroad in different countries, England, France, Germany, Morocco, the U.S.A., and against widely differing backgrounds. Such misadventures were not always to prove conducive to family harmony in the outlook of the third generation, although they were just as often to evoke sympathies and loyalties as strong as those that existed in the days before 1914.

Particularly firm were to be the links between the children of Prince Constantine. His own outlook reflected the homeliness of his childhood, and the simple manner in which he and his wife brought up their family was similarly reflected in the characters of all their children when they became adults. In spite of this austere routine, the family was a very happy one, and the affection which its members bore for each other has been shown by the way they have stood together through all the blows of ill-fortune that have struck them since.

The Crown Princess Sophie, like her husband, inclined to the English way of life. Prince Constantine had built his own house in the Tatoï grounds, and here, as also in



H M. Queen Sophie



King Constantine returns to Athens in 1920.

Crown Prince Carol of Roumania and Princess Helen

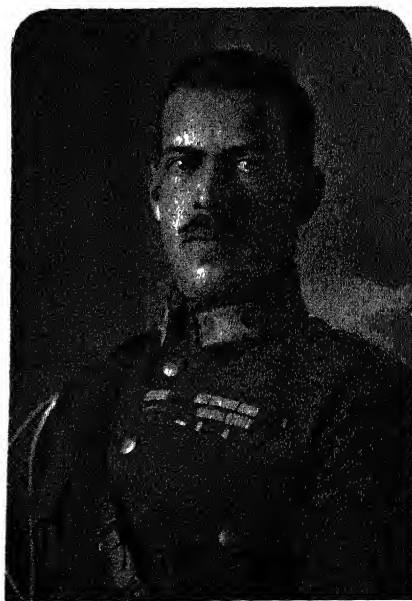




King George II



Queen Elizabeth of Greece



the Palace built for him in Athens, Princess Sophie ran her household on English lines. Her children had English governesses and tutors, and she sent them frequently to Eastbourne for their holidays. In the home, English was the language normally used. It is hardly surprising that in these circumstances all her children grew up with strong inclinations towards the British tradition, and with their parents' habit of using English as their mother tongue. Their simple way of life was to prove one of the reasons why, in later years, the marriages of two of the children, George and Helen, foundered on the rock of incompatibility. But these consequences were to come many years later, long after the time when the children could play with their ponies and pets around the two houses at Tatoi, or roam freely through the many acres of forest without thought of harm or injury. For in those days it was safe for the King and his children and grandchildren to move without fear of the assassin's attack. King George, indeed, would stroll around without guards or even attendants, and would open up conversation with people met casually, not only in and near the Tatoi estate, but also in Athens and other cities. It was this sense of security among a people who loved him that led eventually to disaster.

For the occasion of his death arose only because he insisted on showing his devotion to the cause of Greek nationalism. In the Balkan War of 1912 against the Turks, the King and Crown Prince Constantine together made their triumphant entrance into the city of Salonika, from which Constantine had driven the enemy a few days before. Because there were arguments, especially with Bulgaria, about whether Greece should retain possession of this capture, King George took up residence in the city as a gesture of the national determination that no political intrigues should rob Greece of a prize almost entirely Greek in its population, and theirs by both conquest and right. March, 1913, saw him on the eve of the jubilee of his reign. Well content with a lifetime devoted to Greece, he had decided to spend the rest of his life in quiet retirement, and to abdicate in favour of Constantine, then at Janina, which his armies had just captured. That day the King

had been to the railway station to see the Queen leave for Vienna. He had had a long talk with his third son, Prince Nicholas, then acting as Military Governor. In the evening he was strolling informally, according to his habit, in the Salonika streets, chatting to any passer-by who happened to catch his interest, when he was shot at point-blank range by a Macedonian-Greek, thought to have been a tool of the Bulgarians. He was killed instantly. The Queen had arrived at Belgrade when the news reached her. She returned at once in a condition of distress that can be imagined.

Popular though the King was, it was not until his death that the Greeks fully appreciated his worth, and the long periods of peace with which his reign had been blessed. He ruled always within the limits of constitutional authority, trying to guide rather than to compel, although there were occasions when he had to control refractory statesmen with the powers of the Royal prerogative that the Constitution gave him. Nevertheless he was often reproached by the Greeks themselves for not interfering enough in internal affairs! He had guided the regeneration of Greece, and his whole life had been given to securing for his people the realisation of their national aspirations, but always within the bounds of what was reasonable and practical for a tiny poverty-ridden State.

The Greeks had lost a trusted sovereign, wise and enlightened, whose moderating influence had helped his factious subjects to work in harmony, and whose insight into foreign politics had steered his Ministers round many an awkward corner. In his place, the nation gained a king who, although lacking his father's experience and perhaps his tolerant sagacity, possessed two great qualifications that endeared him to the Greek people—his Orthodox faith and his native birth. He was a Greek. From boyhood he had symbolised the nation's secret hopes, and when he married Princess Sophie, popular superstition saw him as that Constantine who, so the prophecy said, when sharing the throne with a Sophie, was to restore to the Greeks their ancient Byzantine glories.

Prince Constantine had been made a scapegoat by the

Military League for the Greek reverses in the short fight with Turkey in 1897. The experience taught him the lesson that military undertakings should not be attempted without adequate and efficient forces. As Inspector-General of the Army, he devoted himself, with the aid of a French Military Mission, to reforms that were reflected in the successes of the forces that he commanded with outstanding tactical skill in the conquest of Salonika and the supposedly impregnable Janina. Thus, when he ascended the throne, his military prestige stood high, and the country regarded him with pride and affection as the man who had already realised some of their most cherished dreams. It can be understood why his reception in Athens, when he returned in the dual rôle of Conqueror and newly-ascended King, was one of the most exuberant that the Greeks had yet extended to their monarchs.

CHAPTER III

THE FALL OF KING CONSTANTINE

CONSTANTINE became King at the age of forty-five, a man of mature knowledge with sound military judgment, and a hard-headed appreciation of international affairs, gained partly from his father's fund of political wisdom. He had an intensely patriotic approach to his responsibilities as King, and would let nothing interfere with his considered duty. As later events were to show, no amount of pressure, not even the risk of losing his throne, would weaken a decision to do what he considered right for his country.

The King was tall and strongly built, with a square jaw and firmly-set mouth that indicated the obduracy of which he was capable. He was impulsive, swift in speech, and liable to be unguardedly outspoken, a characteristic that sometimes led him into difficulties. Open and straightforward, he hated insincerity and dissimulation—qualities not infrequently met among his Ministers. Nevertheless, his charm and friendliness won him a wide circle of intimate friends. Like his father, he understood the common man, and liked to put aside his rank and mingle with them. He was beloved by the mass of the people, and especially by the soldiery. One of the many minor reasons for his popularity with the Army was his possession of a full vocabulary of Greek oaths, which he never hesitated to use when rebuking troops or peasants for some petty offence. They, of course, were delighted to be castigated so confidently in their own idiom.

Yet another reason for the Army's affection for its King was his readiness to accept the role of *kumbaros*, or godfather, to the children of his soldiers. In the Greek religion the godfather assumes a relationship to the child and its parents that is spiritually closer than the tie of blood. Thus the parents, when they met the King, would greet

him with the unembarrassed friendliness of brotherly kinship. When his youngest child, Princess Katherine, was born, all the officers and men of the two Services became her godfathers, and thus all of them took on this brotherly relationship with their King.

But Constantine's prestige and popularity did not rest only on such appeals to sentiment. His achievements as a military leader, and his work as his father's deputy over many long years, had made him in fact, as well as in name, the nation's natural leader. In him Greece possessed a King whom it revered and trusted, and in Eleutherios Venizelos a Premier of acknowledged skill and statesmanship. The first two years of the reign were among the happiest that Greece has ever enjoyed, and at the apex of the country's content was "the cherished palladium of the Crown". The Greek people could not know that 1914 was to see the end of the half-century of harmony between them and the Royal Family as a whole, nor could they guess that the King who had done so much to bring them to their present dignity was soon to crash on the rocks of political intrigue.

After eighty years of frustration, many of the aspirations of the Hellenes had at last been achieved. Certainly large Greek communities still remained under alien rule, but nobody at this moment wished to grasp at further conquests. The purpose of King, Government and people was to repair the ravages of war, to assimilate the newly-acquired provinces, and to consolidate the national unity in an ambitious plan of reconstruction. The country responded whole-heartedly. In a wave of proud nationalism, political and personal differences were forgotten, and all classes joined eagerly in supporting the King and his Ministers in their work. Internal disorder and brigandage vanished. The future seemed bright. All that was needed was a long spell of peaceful development free from external disturbance.

The outbreak of war in 1914 thus came as a disagreeable shock, but the Greeks hoped they might keep clear of a conflict in which their interests were not directly involved. The treaty with Serbia did not impose any obligation to intervene in a war against a non-Balkan Power. Greece

was under no legal or moral obligation to attach herself to any of the other combatants. Her sympathy for Britain and France was balanced by her respect for Germany's past achievements. Her King thus promptly advocated neutrality.

But when Turkey entered the war the situation changed, for Greek interests became directly involved. There seemed now an opportunity to help destroy the Ottoman Empire, to release many hundreds of thousands of Greeks from Turkish rule, and even perhaps to achieve the dream of enthroning a Greek king once more in Constantinople, the old Byzantium. To Venizelos, who had already declared sympathy with Allied aims, the opportunity was too good to miss, whatever the risks. Neutrality offered no scope for the adventure of "the Great Idea". The King, who could have desired nothing better than to have reigned in Constantinople as Constantine XII, was nevertheless not prepared to enter into military gambles that might expose the country to invasion from the north. Influenced by a prudent military outlook that the Premier lacked, he wished Greece to remain clear until the Army recovered from the two recent Balkan Wars, for he knew it was short of equipment and supplies, and in no state to resist a combined German-Bulgar attack. He had not forgotten the causes of the defeats of 1897. In these views he was strongly supported by his General Staff, then headed by Colonel John Metaxas. The failure of the effort to break through the Dardanelles still further stiffened the King in his opinion that Greece should remain neutral until the Entente was capable of preserving Greek security.

At the outbreak of war the Kaiser had asked King Constantine to lead Greece into the German camp. On King Constantine's refusal, the Kaiser spoke of his secret pacts with Bulgaria and Turkey, and threatened that if Greece did not join them she would be treated as an enemy. But Constantine still refused. He did not trust the Bulgarians, nor like the Turks, and he rejected the idea of opposing Russia, and so giving her an excuse to exploit her ambitions in the southern Balkans. How long-sighted was his attitude has been amply shown by the present Soviet policy of trying

to force Greece into a Slav-controlled Balkan federation. But there was an even stronger reason. The King knew quite well that to have declared for Germany would have exposed Greece, with her long coastline, to irresistible maritime pressure from the fleets and seaborne forces of Britain and France. He knew and declared that even had she wished to, Greece could not join Germany without inviting disaster. But at this stage, in the King's view, it was nearly as dangerous to become an ally of the Entente as its enemy. He did accept the possibility of joining the Entente later, when the Greek Army was able to resist invasion, or when a sufficiently large Entente army had been assembled at Salonika, or even when the Entente ceased to be always on the point of losing the war. As a realist, the King, and most of the country with him, could see no advantage in being dragged into the conflict by what appeared to be the losing side, with every prospect of being swiftly ravished by Bulgaria and Turkey.

These reasons for not exposing the country to retaliatory military action by either group of Powers were self-evident, but they did not influence the fiery nationalism driving the sanguine Venizelos. His offer of Greek aid against Turkey in exchange for promises of concessions in Asia Minor had been made at a desperate hour in the Entente's fortunes, when the outcome of the Battle of the Marne and of the war were in doubt. It therefore swayed British sentiment strongly in his favour, and although he had acted only on his personal authority, the Entente nevertheless accepted his gesture as the basis of their attitude to Greek participation in the war. The King, as the chief protagonist of neutrality, found himself drawn into the arena of party politics. Encouraged by the situation, his opponents started to widen what had originally been a difference of opinion between two strong personalities into a rift with an ideological significance that eventually split the country into two rival camps. They found an easy opening to challenge the King by suggesting that his desire for neutrality was born of unpatriotic motives.

Past events should have shown the Greeks, of all people, that dynastic ties can have little influence on the manoeuv-

rings of power politics, for the fact that King George I was Queen Alexandra's brother had never influenced British statesmen in their succession of cynical and oppressive actions against Greece, especially during her long-drawn-out efforts to help Crete join the motherland. But the Venizelists declared that the country's politics were dominated by the King's dynastic links with the German Emperor, whose sister, Queen Sophie, was supposed to exercise a strong pro-German influence over the King and Court and certain of his Ministers. The King, who at the opening of the war had in his usual impulsive way expressed his personal good wishes to the Kaiser, was accused of being under the influence of his brother-in-law, and to be pro-German in spirit, partly because of his earlier training in Germany and partly because the Kaiser had, in 1913, presented him with the baton of a Field Marshal in the Prussian Army in acknowledgment of his military prowess the preceding year. That the King should show a friendly attitude towards the German Court was only a natural result of his marriage, although he never forgot that the Kaiser had been no friend of his father. But that his relationship should imply that he had become a tool of Germany and a traitor to his country is beyond credibility and common-sense when examined in a perspective free from the impassioned partisanship of the time. Few people in France or Britain ever paused to consider why a King who was born a Hellene, who had shown since boyhood that the interests of his country were the most intense thing in his life, and who had won the admiration and gratitude of his people for his leadership, should now suddenly throw away a lifetime of achievement in order to win the approval of a Germany allied to Greece's traditional enemies—Bulgaria and Turkey. Yet it was of such irrational treachery that he was accused by the Venizelists and the Entente Powers, which lost no time in exploiting so opportune a situation. Thus were sown the seeds of discord that, with increasingly enthusiastic watering by British and French diplomacy, brought back once more to Greece the fratricidal strife of the past.

For the cynical process of splitting Greece asunder

subsequently followed by the Entente was to leave its impression on Greek affairs even to the present day. Looking back on the succession of events by which Greece was forced to enter the war, there is little for which the French and British may now feel anything but shame. They offered her recently won Thracian territory to Bulgaria as a bribe to keep out of the war. They forced her to extend military concessions that were improper for a free and neutral State. They were violently angry when, in reaction to Germany's protests, compensating concessions were made to her. They accused the King of unconstitutional action, and encouraged the Venizelists in successive infringements of the Constitution. They landed Allied troops at Salonika on an invitation made by Venizelos, which he afterwards denied, and then permitted General Sarrail, their Commander, to behave arrogantly, like a conqueror holding down a desperate enemy. They introduced control of the Press, and after outlawing subversive German propaganda, replaced it by Allied propaganda aimed against the King and legal Government. They instituted a Secret Service Police, recruited from unreliable elements of the whole Levant, which raided Greek homes and broke the law with impunity, and was even alleged to have been responsible for setting alight and destroying two-thirds of the King's Tatoi estate. The Queen carried her youngest child, Katherine, for nearly two miles before they were clear of the flames. The King and Prince Paul escaped death by the narrowest margin, but his A.D.C. and seventeen others of his staff were unable to find a way out and lost their lives.

The resolve of the King and most of his Government not to go to war was matched only by the Entente's determination to establish a "rival" government that would. And so the situation went from bad to worse. Anybody who was not for Venizelos was labelled pro-German. The protests of the Greeks at infringements of their country's neutrality were dismissed as impertinence, and their reactions to coercion as treachery. Pro-Entente "insurrections" against the Government were arranged in Crete and elsewhere by the Secret Police, but spontaneous re-

actions by the Athens population against interference by Allied troops were attributed to deep-laid schemings by the King and his immediate supporters.

Then came the day in December, 1916, when the Royal Palace was struck several times during a bombardment by Allied warships lying off Piræus, and the Queen and her children had to take shelter for two hours in the cellars. Such barbarism could hardly be expected to inspire pro-Entente feelings in the Queen, or in any of the population of Athens who also suffered. Neither did it shame the Entente representatives who were in the Palace at the time, and who wished also to go to the cellars, but who were bidden by the King to stay with him in his salon. This bombardment, accompanied by threats to arrest the Royal Family, was followed by a pitiless blockade that quickly brought large areas of the country to the edge of starvation.

This ruthless bullying, so far from recommending itself to the King as a good argument for officially abandoning Greek neutrality, merely stiffened his determination, although he well knew that he was within an ace of losing the Crown. As Mr. Winston Churchill wrote in *The World Crisis*, "King Constantine had been trained all his life as a soldier. The road to his heart was through a sound military plan, and this he was never offered. . . ." Instead he was granted, among many varieties of humiliation, charges of treachery, insults to the Crown, destruction of his property, and starvation of his people.

The accusations of pro-Germanism made against Queen Sophie were without justification during the first phases of the war. Over her thirty-five years of married life she had shown unbroken loyalty to Greece, and for her welfare work alone her name was in the prayers of thousands of her subjects. Her affection for her brother, which was a natural enough feeling, even among monarchs, was tempered by a candid and critical dislike of his pretensions and bad manners. The Kaiser never let himself be influenced by family sentiment. He objected to Queen Sophie embracing the Greek Orthodox Faith, and for a time would not permit her to visit Germany. All her life she had shown her inclination for the British way of living. At the

beginning of the war she wanted Greece to be neutral for the same reasons that sway the rulers of Switzerland or any other country that struggles to avoid war. But the manner in which the Entente Powers inflicted successive injuries and humiliations on her husband and herself, and their family and friends and supporters, and finally on their unhappy people starving under the blockade, at last drove her to appeal to her brother for help to escape such terrorism. From the Entente point of view this action may have been a matter for hostility, but the Queen was not the only Greek who would have welcomed German intervention, had it been possible. That long months of unashamed ill-usage created a pro-German, or rather an anti-Entente section of the community was only to be expected. To bring about this condition, the Kaiser had needed no weapon of propaganda other than the Entente Fleet.

The vital step in this inglorious story was taken when the Revolutionary Committee in Salonika, with Venizelos as its head, was recognised as a *de facto* government by the Entente, which accredited special representatives to it. At the same time, with an elastic sense of propriety, their representatives remained accredited to King Constantine. This action was really a way of keeping an eye on the man who was still the leader of the bulk of the country. But this fact counted for nothing with the Entente, for the urge of military necessity—the same excuse that Germany gave for the rape of Belgium—impelled them to ride roughshod over the rights of a small and feeble State. In all this affair Britain took a slightly second place to France, but she could still be accused of having earned “the reputation of a Power that took pleasure in bullying the weak and truckling to the strong”, as Lord Salisbury wrote of England under Palmerston’s regime between 1850 and 1863. But by their act of encouraging a minority faction to defy, and eventually to take over the Constitutional authority, the Entente Powers set up a precedent in technique that was to be repeated a quarter of a century later by that careful student of history, Adolf Hitler, and also by the Soviets in their “conversion” of satellite States to Communism.

Thus, as the months passed, the unfortunate King was driven by ruthless opponents and the inexorability of events down a path along which he would make no return. And at the end he was accused not merely of wanting to be neutral, but of trying to drag Greece into war on the German side. To nobody did it seem inconceivable that the King would expose himself and his dynasty to disaster by such action at a time when Greece was split to the verge of civil war, when a large Entente army stood prepared at Salonika, and when French and British battle-ships lay off Piræus ready to bombard the capital. The King well understood that the accusations were fabricated to provide an excuse for his removal, but his stubborn nature, and his pride, forbade him to compromise on a matter about which he was so certain he was right.

Soon the day arrived when M. Jonnart, speaking as "High Commissioner" for the three Protecting Powers, presented an ultimatum demanding the King's immediate abdication on the ground that he had violated the Constitution which they had guaranteed! The Crown Prince was excluded from succession because the French thought his early military training in Germany rendered him also suspect. These demands were made peremptorily, under the threat of bombarding the capital, occupying Greece and ending the dynasty.

When rumours of this development leaked out, the people of Athens assembled in large crowds to demand that the King should not desert them, but he realised the futility of provoking bloodshed and probably civil war, and grimly submitted. His decision sacrificed the last dregs of Greek neutrality, and the subsequent actions of Jonnart temporarily put an end to the Greek Constitution. Jonnart's proclamation of the abdication contained reassuring promises to the population, but many of these were soon broken. For example, at the time he was guaranteeing that there should be no victimisation, the Entente police were acting on a "black list", supplied from Salonika, by which several hundred people, politicians, soldiers and others, were despatched into banishment.

One of them was the Chief of the General Staff, Colonel Metaxas.

King Constantine appointed Prince Alexander as his successor. On June 11th, 1917, the Prince was brought secretly to the Palace and took the Oath of Allegiance to the Constitution, while outside, people still waited with the object of physically preventing the King from leaving them. Accompanied by their family, including the Crown Prince, the King and Queen left the Palace by a back door, so avoiding the crowds, and made their way to a small port in the Gulf of Euboea, from which they left for exile in Switzerland.

The King had gone, not by the will of the nation, but through the intrigues of an imperialistically ambitious minority, supported by the forces of foreign Powers. The Entente had transformed a national hero into a national martyr, whose misfortunes remained strong in the public memory, and whose vindication was soon to come. For as the family motto told, King Constantine's strength lay in the love of his people, and this he had never forfeited.

CHAPTER IV

NADIR OF A MONARCHY

As soon as Athens had been cleared of the principal "traitors and enemies" of the Entente—for in addition to those banished, many hundreds of others were thrown into the Athens prisons—Venizelos came to the capital to take the oath of office. His first steps were to declare war on the Central Powers and to call for a General Mobilisation. But he deferred the holding of elections until after the war, a decision in which the Entente astutely agreed.

The main cause of the lengthy inaction of the Entente contingents at Salonika had been lack of supplies and equipment. These were now speedily provided, and the force soon moved to an offensive. In the operations that subsequently developed against the Bulgars, a quarter of a million Greek troops made their contribution to success. Their aid was recognised when the time came to share the spoils of victory. By the Treaty of Neuilly, Greece recovered the seaboard of Eastern Thrace, and by that of Sèvres, territorial gains in Europe and Asia, including the Greek-populated port of Smyrna and its hinterland. With the approval of France, Britain and Italy, military plans were at once drawn up to take possession of this prize.

King Alexander, then aged twenty-four, was a Captain of Artillery, who had never expected to assume regal responsibilities and had been afforded no experience in State affairs. Deeply moved by the way in which his parents, brother and friends had been thrust into exile, he bore a natural resentment against the men who had achieved control of the country by the aid of foreign arms. He knew that the task his father had given him was to keep the dynasty alive through the difficult period ahead, and he devoted himself manfully to this duty. But the going was hard. His position was not eased by the manner in which

some of his Ministers lost no opportunity of reminding him that he was the son of a traitor, and of taunting him with the insecurity of his crown. He soon realised that he was nothing but a figurehead, whose task was to remain amenable to the Prime Minister, under the overhanging threat of the Powers to end the dynasty. But it was with difficulty that he forced himself to endure some of the indignities to which his family was subjected. The portraits of the King and Queen in public buildings were torn down. Many of their oldest friends were thrown into prison just because they were their friends. All the old Palace servants who had served his father were dismissed. And scores of other spiteful acts included such petty measures as cutting out from school books the records of King Constantine's achievements as a military leader.

Prince Christopher gives an eloquent picture in his *Memoirs* of his nephew's situation, and the way in which he was cut off from his family. "He was a prisoner in his own palace. His orders were disregarded, he was surrounded night and day by spies. If he showed the slightest preference for any human being, that person immediately disappeared from his household. Only the known enemies of his father and the Royal House were permitted to be in his service. . . . It was useless for him to protest; no one listened. The few friends who were able to see him said that his face had grown prematurely lined and sad.

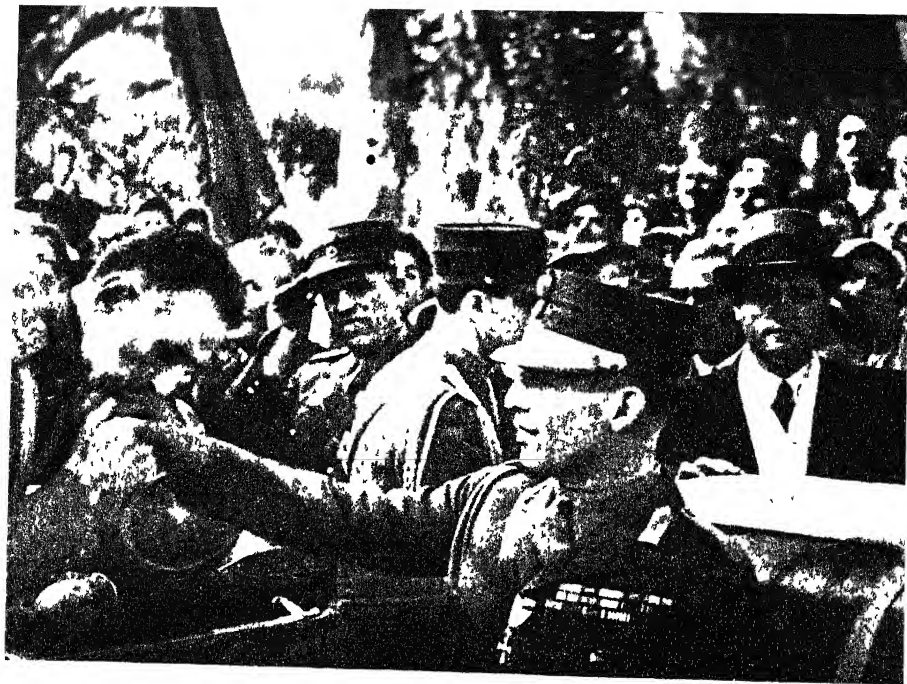
"He wrote to his parents many times, but the letters never reached them. From the time he bade 'good-bye' to his mother on the day of his accession until the day of his death, three years and four months later, she never heard directly from him. Queen Sophie adored her son and fretted out her heart in secret over him. When in 1918 she heard that he was going to Paris she shed tears of joy. 'At last I shall be able to telephone him,' and for days she could talk of nothing else. She put through a call to the hotel where he was staying, waited in breathless suspense for the communication. At last it came! The voice of Romanos, the Greek Minister, came crisply over the wires: 'His Majesty is sorry, but he cannot come to the telephone'. Queen Sophie went quietly away from

the telephone. She said nothing, but the disappointment in her face wrung one's heart. Long afterwards we were told that King Alexander had never even been told of the telephone call!"

And yet, despite these unpleasantries, the young, handsome King was popular with the people. They liked him because he had something of their own independent, volatile character. He was lively, careless and good-natured, and as a Prince had enjoyed driving his car around the country at the highest possible speed. In every way he was a contrast to his elder brother, George, strict, serious and with a high sense of his destiny.

In November, 1919, the King secretly married Made-moiselle Aspasia Manos, the daughter of the Master of the Horse in King Constantine's Household. He had known her since childhood. She was an extremely beautiful girl, with the traditional profile and regular features of the Greek, and the pair made a handsome couple as they drove around Athens together. But the marriage was not regarded with approval, either by the Royal Family or by many of the Greek people. For the average Greek is so jealously democratic that none can bear to see another Greek elevated above himself to preferential high estate. The King, his sense of responsibility frustrated by the cavalier treatment of the Government and the knowledge that he was King in name only, cared little for these objections, for his marriage gave him happiness in his isolation. But he had forgotten that, in his dynasty, to win a moment of content is too often to invite a blow from Fate. Tragedy fell quickly, and in a manner that compels wonder at the purpose and pattern of our existence.

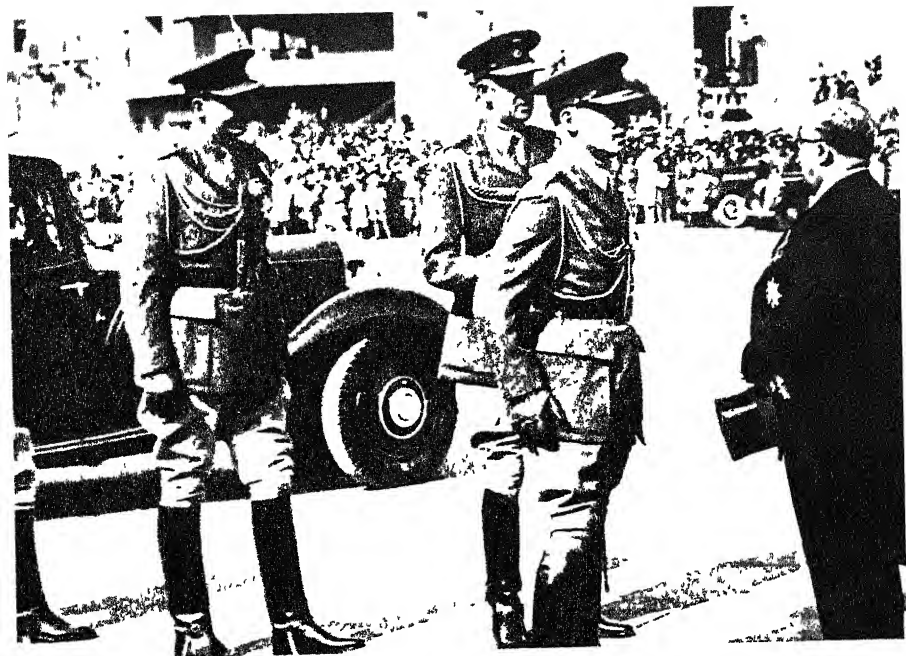
In September, 1920, while walking in the gardens of the Palace at Tatoi, the King saw that his dog was being attacked by a pet monkey belonging to the vineyard keeper. He tried to separate the animals, and was bitten by the monkey. Blood-poisoning quickly set in, and could not be arrested in spite of several operations. The young King lay dying in ever-increasing pain. The news flashed to Queen Sophie, still in exile in Switzerland. She begged for permission to go to him, but was not allowed by the



King George visits a Cretan village in 1937

King George visits Kalambaka in 1938





King George, with Crown Prince Paul, Prince Andrew and Prince Christopher, greeted by M. Metaxas at a ceremony in Athens 1938.

The Royal Family leaving the Cathedral on St George's Day 1939. R. to L. Princess Irene, King George, Crown Prince Paul with Crown Princess Frederica, Prince Andrew with Princess Katherine, and Prince Philip.



revolutionary Government to enter Greece. Desperate, she asked her mother-in-law to make the journey, but Queen Olga arrived in Athens twelve hours late. King Alexander died on October 25th, 1920, his last hours spent in a delirium calling for his mother. He was then aged twenty-seven, and had just begun to savour the sweet as well as the bitter things of life. A few months later Princess Aspasia gave birth to a daughter, Princess Alexandra.

The death of the King threw Greek internal affairs into renewed turmoil, for there arose again the difficult question of the succession. The crown was offered to Prince Paul, next in line after Alexander, but he unhesitatingly refused, on the grounds that his father and his brother George had never renounced their rights to the throne. The problem was one that could no longer be withheld from the people, for no election had taken place since King Constantine had been forced to abdicate. Elections were held in November, with issues that became resolved into one question—Venizelos or Constantine? The Royalists hoped that in spite of the dynamic role that Venizelos had played in placing Greece among the victors, the country had not entirely forgotten its attachment to the exiled King. But even the Royalists were surprised at the results, for only a hundred and twenty of Venizelos's Liberals were returned out of a total of three hundred and seventy members. Stunned at the people's rejection of his efforts for the past four years, Venizelos resigned and left the country.

A plebiscite confirmed the King's recall, and the cruiser *Averoff* was sent to fetch him from Venice. Whilst waiting for his arrival, the Queen Mother Olga, who had remained in Greece after Alexander's death, undertook the unusual task of acting as her son's Regent. On December 19th, in company with the Queen and Crown Prince, King Constantine returned to Athens. The Royal party was received with frantic demonstrations of loyalty and affection. The multitude that stood for many hours awaiting their King, and chanting "*Erchetai! erchetai!*" ("He is coming! he is coming!"), swept irresistibly on to the railway tracks as his train arrived, and brought it to a standstill before it reached the terminal platform. The photograph opposite

page 32 shows the King watching some of the crowd outside the window of his carriage, and thinking perhaps that with this uproarious reception the wheel of his fortunes had turned the full circle since he ascended the throne nearly eight years before.

After the way in which he had been cast out in 1917, the King was deeply moved and inspirited by this tremendous expression of his popularity, but the level-headed Queen Sophie, on whom the manner of her son's death and the unjust treatment of the war years had left a bitter imprint, remembered the demonstrations that had attended the Conqueror-King's triumphant entry into Athens in 1912, and she asked whether all this excitement was not too exuberant to last. She could hardly know how quickly her doubts were to be confirmed.

Other members of the Royal Family now returned to their homes, hoping that they could take up their interrupted lives without further disturbance. The children of the King's brothers had suffered in their schooling during exile, for the long arm of the Entente had stretched with incredible venom into the Swiss hotels and homes in which several of the family took refuge, and had forced English and French governesses and nurses to leave their employers under threat of severe punishment, including loss of nationality. To such extremes can official displeasure be extended in time of war.

In 1921, soon after the King's return, the Greek Royal House became united in a double matrimonial tie with the Royal House of Roumania. The Crown Prince George was married in Bucharest to the classically beautiful Princess Elizabeth, eldest daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie. Two weeks later, Prince George's sister, the spirited and lovely Princess Helen, was married in Athens to Crown Prince Carol. Both marriages were grand affairs, especially that in the Roumanian capital, but both were, to a great extent, the result of the Roumanian desire to be linked by dynastic ties to friendly Balkan States. Queen Marie herself had much to do in arranging the meetings that led to the two engagements.

Neither marriage could be called an impassioned love-

match, although there was undoubtedly at first a strong attraction between Helen and Carol, as they showed by their pleasure in each other's company. Prince George and his bride, whose grave but ardent temperament might well have fitted his own, were both perhaps conscious that their marriage was just another dynastic union, and although it was to endure for fourteen years—seven years longer than that of Helen and Carol—their childlessness and the pressure of events, especially the disadvantages of exile, eventually brought about the inevitable break.

As previously indicated, both marriages were handicapped by the difference in the upbringing of the two families. King Constantine's children had grown up in the extreme of simplicity, with emphasis on the tradition of English country life. The Roumanian Court, on the other hand, in spite of the influence of the British-born Queen Marie, was rich and splendid, and surrounded with pomp and pageantry. While Athens was then as dull as an overgrown provincial town, Bucharest was gay and exciting, always the Paris of the Balkans. It is possible that Princess Elizabeth found it difficult to adjust herself to a Court that, by Roumanian standards, was poor and primitive, and to a husband who, in his unemotional earnestness, was completely the opposite of her lively, temperamental brother Carol. On the other hand, Princess Helen, after the first flush of newly-wedded happiness, failed to intrigue Prince Carol by her efforts to adjust her home in Bucharest to the less ornate style to which she was accustomed.

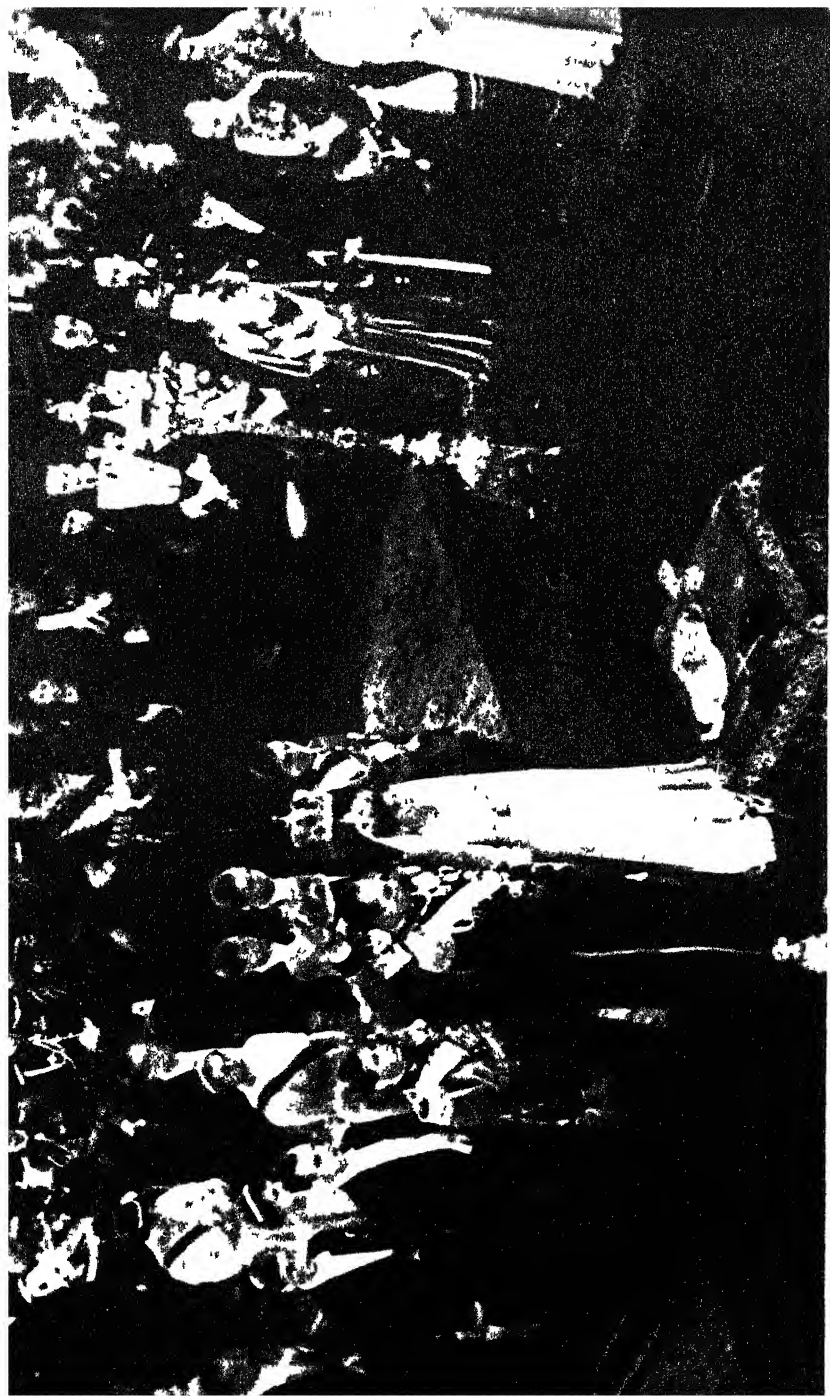
Meanwhile, King Constantine had settled in to his renewed responsibilities. In spite of the goodwill and affection shown him by the people, he was faced by a most difficult situation, for he had inherited "the Great Idea", Venizelos's ambitious plan for the revival of a Greater Greece, now implemented in preparations for the conquest of Western Turkey. The King's distrust of this scheme from its inception had led to his exile, and his attitude towards it was still the same, in spite of its luring promise for the country's aggrandisement. With his cautious military outlook, he saw clearly the difficulties of trying to

establish and retain Greek sovereignty over a large area of Asia Minor, especially as the Entente Powers, after first encouraging the scheme, were now renouncing it. Late in the day they, too, had realised the political implications of a carved-up Turkey, and they seized on King Constantine's return against their wishes as an excuse to wash their hands of the whole affair. This action deepened the King's predicament, for he was compelled either to risk losing his crown by sacrificing gains awarded to Greece under the Treaty of Sèvres, or to commit himself to a scheme of conquest which his better judgment told him had become even more hazardous than before.

Just as he had wished to keep Greece out of war in 1914, so he did now. But even had he decided against the campaign, he would have found it impossible to curb the country's ardour. Intoxicated by the opportunity offered by the apparent break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the Greeks were sure that the hour had struck to revive the ancient Byzantine Empire. "... if any Greek . . . had counselled self-restraint and moderation, both the rival parties, Royalist and Venizelist, who were vying with each other in megalomaniac pretensions, would have considered him a traitor to his country." *

The King was constrained not only by the spirit of the country, but also by the military measures already undertaken. Three hundred thousand men had been mobilised, and a large army was already in Turkey waiting to strike. The King could not have withdrawn the troops in the hinterland of Smyrna without exposing the large Greek population to the angry reactions of the Turks. Neither was it possible to counsel a policy of waiting and negotiation, for the Army and General Staff were impatient to gain a quick and certain victory while the Turks were still down and out. The King could not resist without risk of internal disaster, and he was perhaps influenced by the unhappy outcome of his previous stand against war. This time he surrendered to the situation, declared himself in favour of the campaign, and, having once decided, gave it his full support.

* W. Kolarz, *Myths and Realities in Eastern Europe*, p. 235.



The Marriage of Crown Prince Paul and Princess Frederica of Hanover at the Cathedral in Athens Gold crowns are being held above the heads of the bride and bridegroom, according to the Greek Orthodox rites King Michael of



King George II chats with the Duke of Kent and Prince Paul of Yugoslavia

Wedding Group L to R The Duke of Brunswick, Princess Frederica, Crown Prince Paul, the Duchess of Brunswick. Standing directly behind are King Michael, Prince William of Russia, Princess Paul of Yugoslavia, Princess Irene, King George II



But the expedition was doomed to failure. The Army had not been efficiently refitted and trained after its fighting in Bulgaria. The Corps of Officers was divided by political differences, and the Army as a whole affected by seditious activities that emanated mainly from the group of political exiles in Constantinople, who gave their energies not to helping Greece to carry out the military policy they had initiated, but to weakening her unity and determination.

As is now history, the Greeks launched their attack in March, 1921, penetrated Turkey nearly to Ankara, and were heavily defeated at the Sakharia River. They retreated to the Eskischir-Afium line, from which in August of the following year they were driven in disorder to Smyrna by a Turkish army regenerated by the inspiring leadership of Mustapha Kemal. The Greek troops had been accused of behaving savagely in captured villages, and the Turks now took violent revenge. Smyrna was sacked and burnt, and many thousands of Greek troops and civilians were burnt alive or drowned or massacred in scenes of horror that beggar description. When the writer visited Smyrna three years later the centre of the town by the harbour was still in ruins, looking as though it had been destroyed only a few weeks before. For this terrible disaster the Greeks were only partly responsible. The Entente Powers bore the heavier load of blame, first for emboldening, and indeed committing the Greeks to such an adventure, and secondly, for withholding the promised support of their arms.

So far as the Crown was concerned, these misfortunes produced an immediate adverse reaction. By the last week in September, insurrection had broken out in the Army, and revolution at home. Inspired mainly by the anti-monarchists in Constantinople, and led by Colonel Plastiras, a party of the defeated troops demanded the King's abdication, and backed their demand with a threat to advance against Athens. There were large forces loyal to the Crown who were eager to fight the rebels, but Constantine, scrupulously acknowledging the futility of civil war in this moment of national defeat, abdicated on September 26th, 1922.

He had spent three and a half months with the Army in Asia Minor, and had returned very much shaken in health. Weary and mortified, he left Greece for Palermo, and died in Italy the following January from hæmorrhage of the brain—a polite label for a broken heart. Time has given clarity to this tragic episode, for it is clear enough now that the King, who had sacrificed himself once in opposing the idea of the Anatolian conquest and who had no share in its planning, became the scapegoat for a calamity in which his responsibility had been that, in an insoluble predicament, he had not actively resisted the attempt to realise another man's ambitions. It was the irony of Fate that Constantine returned to the throne in time to bear the obloquy that would otherwise have fallen inevitably on the shoulders of Venizelos.

For the second time the King had been driven from his throne by a powerful clique that threatened civil war. It was not by the will of the nation that Constantine went into exile and to his death. The affection of the mass of the common people was still his, and the imprint of his personality remained with them long after his death. For years afterwards King George, whether on the throne or in exile, was contemplated not as himself, but as his father's son, and was referred to in the common idiom as "the son of the widow".

It was in such hopelessly unpropitious circumstances that King George II assumed the Crown. He was given no chance to help overcome the appalling conditions into which the country quickly relapsed. He ruled as the prisoner of the Revolutionary Committee, which had by then assumed government, and which did not even keep him informed of what was going on. Like Alexander, he was isolated from his friends and his every movement watched, but his constraint was shared by the Queen, his brother Paul and his uncle Andrew, and his A.D.C., Colonel Levidis.

The King's personal outlook at the outset of his reign was embittered by the trial, at the orders of the Revolutionary Committee (called an Assembly, but still headed by Plastiras, now a general), of Prince Andrew and six other

Royalists (three ex-Premiers, two ex-Ministers and the Commander-in-Chief). All but Prince Andrew were sentenced to death and shot, because they were considered by the revolutionaries to have been mainly responsible for the disaster. But for British intervention Prince Andrew himself might also have been shot. Instead he was sentenced to deprivation of rank and banishment for life. These violent actions shocked the civilised world. Great Britain broke off diplomatic relations. Everywhere it was felt that had Greek arms won victory these men would have been treated as heroes, but that in failure they were the victims of the Army's efforts to cover its own mortification. The King, who was as little prone to dissimulation as his father, found it difficult to maintain even formally polite relations with those responsible for this outrage.

There followed a period of rule by nominees of the Revolutionary Committee. There was no Constitutional regime, and King George continued to reign in name only. An effort to form a government to include both Royalists and Venizelists failed. In this stalemate, the leader of the Royalists, General Metaxas, tried in October, 1923, to organise a movement to end the control of the Revolutionary Committee. He also failed, the revolt was suppressed, and King George was accused of being implicated in the plot. The accusation was both unjust and absurd, as George was not subtle enough to conspire, but it gave the revolutionaries an excuse to end the monarchy—an aim in which they were now supported by influential elements of both Army and Navy. The King was induced to leave the country to prevent disorder while the Committee decided on the form of government they wanted.

Faced with a similar problem to that of his father fifteen months before, King George concluded that the interests of his country demanded the avoidance of further strife at all costs. He declined to abdicate, but agreed to leave the country under duress. He therefore ended his short, unhappy reign on December 19th, 1923, when he and the Queen and the Crown Prince were escorted to a waiting warship, and sent into an exile that was to last nearly twelve years. On March 25th, 1924, the Assembly deposed the

dynasty, forbade its members to reside in Greece, and confiscated their private property. In spite of warning protests from the absent Venizelos, a Republic was declared, and the decision ratified by a plebiscite the following year—a plebiscite controlled by the police, and denounced by Venizelos as “a farce devoid of any moral value”. The people found themselves without a King, but did not know why, nor even how it had come about.

Meanwhile most of the remaining Greek population in Turkey, or such of them as found means of transport, fled to Greece. Lack of accommodation, food and money led to scenes of great distress. There were attempts at revolution, bloodily repressed. The country relapsed into a state of financial chaos, and as the months slipped by the situation grew steadily worse. The uncontrolled inrush of refugees developed into an arranged exchange of population that during 1923 brought one and a half million souls to Greece, a heavy burden for an already exhausted people only five millions strong. Great aid was given by American charity, and later the work of repatriation was taken over by a League of Nations Commission. But these praiseworthy efforts dealt only with the superficial problems of food and accommodation. The major difficulty of absorbing so large an increase into the economic structure of the country was never wholly solved, for there was created a new element in the country, a frustrated urban population that was to grow up to discontent. The consequences of the Smyrna disaster that had destroyed King Constantine were to have their aftermath in the Communist disturbances twenty years later, that in their turn nearly succeeded in destroying King George II.

Venizelos returned to Greece and assumed the Premiership, but soon resigned under the pressure of antagonistic reactions. A succession of Republican Governments followed, broken periodically by an attempted military *coup d'état*. The internal situation grew worse, inefficiency and corruption flourished. At last General Pangalos made himself dictator in an effort to end the political strife that split the country and stultified progress. He stated that as Greece could not voluntarily adopt the settled and

stable administration she so badly needed, he was prepared to induce that condition by force. But although well-meaning, Pangalos lacked real qualities of leadership, and some of his decrees, which ranged from suppression of the Press for provoking Party passions to a law ordaining that women's skirts must not be more than fourteen inches from the ground, showed that it is not easy to be a consistently effective dictator. At length, Pangalos, after making himself President, was deposed by General Kondylis.

During the following years the fortunes of the several Republican Governments fluctuated between sound achievement and political anarchy. Venizelos returned to office, and accomplished much in improving foreign relations, especially with Turkey. As Premier, he adopted a strong internal policy, accompanied by vigorous methods that during 1931 were criticised as autocratic. He justified his actions, asserting that his mandate from the electorate empowered him to use his authority to enforce discipline. Later, in May, 1932, he introduced measures for the restriction of the Press, for similar reasons to those which had swayed Pangalos, but his proposals met with such opposition that he resigned.

Then followed a period of ineffective government, of party stalemates, of more attempted revolutions, then again a political *impasse*—a deadlock between Government and Opposition. Eventually, in 1935, in a Government of mildly monarchist sympathies under Prime Minister Tsaldaris, some measure of sane agreement was achieved, but this situation was soon shattered by a military rising of Republicans, who suspected Tsaldaris of planning to restore the monarchy, and feared that were this to happen they would lose their posts.

After some dramatic incidents, including the bombing by the loyal Hellenic Air Force of escaping insurgents in the cruiser *Averoff* and her accompanying destroyers, the rising was put down by the Minister of War, General Kondylis, but not before Venizelos had placed himself at the head of it, and so openly besmirched his long-held reputation as an honourable statesman. With many of the other leaders of the rebellion he fled the country

The rebel units of the fleet surrendered their ships to the Italians at Rhodes—an act of treachery that, following on Mussolini's announcement in March, 1934, of Italy's expansionist ambitions, brought the Greeks to a sudden realisation of their danger from both Italy and Bulgaria. But years of neglect, and of pre-occupation with political affairs, had reduced the Services to the lowest levels of unpreparedness, especially in the lack of fighting equipment. An indication of the depths to which these years of internal strife had brought Greece was shown by the fact that the Greek Air Force had not a single bomber, nor even bombs, with which to pursue the rebel battleships. For this purpose five bombers and two railway trucks of bombs were hastily borrowed from the Yugoslav Government.

The degeneration that had followed the abuses of the past decade, and the lack of trustworthy leadership—for Venizelos's share in the revolution had placed him out of court—now led the leaders of the country to the conclusion that the restoration of the monarchy was the only solution to their difficulties. Elections held in June, in which the Republicans took no part, showed a victory for Tsaldaris's Populist Party. The impatient Kondylis, previously an ardent Republican, wrote candidly that Greek "politicians as a whole are not ripe enough for a form of government based on respect for the rights of their opponents". He felt there was no time for further procrastination, and he pushed the issue of the restoration of the monarchy so urgently that Tsaldaris resigned his Premiership. Kondylis took his place, and the Government proclaimed Greece a monarchical State.

During all the years of exile and neglect King George had never once taken any action to help bring about the return of the monarchy, nor even expressed a word in public about whether he desired to return to the throne. This attitude was sometimes criticised as expressing indifference to his country's troubles, but it was his way of showing his conviction that Greece would call him when the time came. Now, at last, without any striving on his part, the country had turned again to the monarchy to rescue them from their troubles,

At the time of the invitation to return, the King, then forty-five—the age at which his father had acceded—was in India tiger-shooting as a guest of the Viceroy. He refused to return to Greece unless the people decided in complete freedom that they wished him back. A plebiscite was held, which voted overwhelmingly for the Restoration. The King was formally invited to return to the throne, from which he had never abdicated. He resumed the Crown on November 25th, 1935, amid the usual enthusiastic acclamations of the Athens population. This time the wheel had taken fifteen years to turn the full circle.

It was perhaps typical of Greek affairs that in spite of the welcome given to their King, nothing had been done to prepare the Palace for his occupation. During his exile it had been used for State banquets and receptions, and most of the building was unfurnished. The King drove there blissfully unaware of what awaited him, and had to sit on his baggage in the corridor while a bedroom was prepared for him!

CHAPTER V

DECISIONS THAT SAVED THE ALLIES

KING GEORGE II had always been close to his father, and had seen him gradually broken by the country whose interests he attempted to protect. Could the newly returned King have known that he in his turn was to be assailed by the same instrument of internal strife supported by foreign intrigue, his resolution to serve Greece might have weakened. As it was, because he had already become accustomed to endure with equanimity and dignity both the disappointments and the triumphs of a regal career, and because he knew that his problems had not yet begun, he faced the future calmly and dispassionately.

His first act was to confirm General Kondylis in the appointment of Premier, and the next to come to loggerheads with him over the punishment of the leaders of the March revolt. Because Kondylis had been primarily responsible for the recall of the monarchy, he expected to be given a free hand, but King George was determined not to renew his reign by sowing seeds for a later harvest of trouble. Influenced, as he admitted, by twelve years' observation of British political tolerance, he wished to follow a line of official appeasement, and to grant an amnesty that should not only cover the leaders of the revolt, including Venizelos, but also permit officer offenders to return to the Services. Kondylis could not force himself to accept so broad a pardon. Reluctantly, therefore, the King dismissed him, dissolved the Military League that had dominated the country's politics for so long, and entrusted the formation of a non-party government to M. Demertzis, a Venizelist ex-university professor. Venizelos, who preferred to remain in exile in Paris, aligned himself publicly with the new regime, and advised the Liberals to do the same. "From the bottom of my heart





Big game in India



With Prince Christopher and a friend at

KING GEORGE ON INFORMAL OCCASIONS

*With his godchild, George, son of Mr M T
Cozzika of Cavo*



At an English racecourse



"I cry : Long Live the King ! " he wrote in a letter which was to become famous.

King George had resumed the throne at a critical moment in the Greek story. The miserable condition into which the country had fallen since the imposition of a Republic by the Revolutionary Committee in 1924 was the inevitable result of lack of stable leadership. During this time Greece had suffered under a *coup d'état* and eleven risings, some of which reached the seriousness of civil war. Elections had been a farce, as Venizelos had foretold. The Army had set up governments and revolted against them as it pleased. There had been two bankruptcies of the currency, in 1923 and 1932. And so Greece had been dragged into the degradation that culminated in the rebels handing over her battleships to the Italians.

This unhappy phase contrasted strikingly with the long period under the monarchy between 1863 and 1914, which saw stable rule and steady development. It was to contrast even more strongly with the period now to follow, for under the King's firm guidance a sick and stricken country was to be regenerated in a few years to a degree that was to enable it to stand among the elect of history. Such a change could not occur fortuitously, for only an inspiring leadership and a disciplined effort could produce so vigorous a development in so short a time.

The story of these five important years has been distorted and misrepresented, and yet the facts are there for all who are prepared to examine them. At first the King hoped that his presence would bring about a national unity that would enable the country to improve both the conditions of living and the state of its defence forces. But he was to be disappointed. His efforts, and those of his Ministers, were blocked by the political deadlock that resulted from the elections which the King insisted should be held in 1936, and especially by the situation that enabled the Communist Party, with fifteen members, to hold the balance between the two main groups, the Liberal-Populists and the Popular Radicals. They used this power systematically to hinder constructive legislation.

The situation was intensified by the death, during the

first few months of the new year, of Demertzis, Tsaldaris and Kondylis, as well as of Venizelos in Paris. The important parties, thus deprived of their chiefs, descended to a condition of unrestrained partisan contention, in which each intrigued and manœuvred for its own immediate political ends without regard for the interests of the State. In order to remove the hold-up of useful legislation that was crippling all progress, and to deprive the Communists of the controlling vote they used for this express purpose, the Chamber passed a vote of confidence in the Government, and empowered it to govern by decree, subject to the approval of a Parliamentary Committee of forty members, which included all the Party leaders. But the factional obstructionism that had negated the functions of Parliament continued also in the Committee. In addition, the Communists, deprived of their Parliamentary powers for making trouble, turned to their underground organisation to promote disaffection throughout the country. The Cabinet tried to control the situation by proposing fixed minimum wages and compulsory arbitration in labour disputes, but the Communist-influenced unions reacted uncompromisingly by calling a general strike for August 6th.

King and Government were faced with an acutely difficult problem. They knew that a general strike might lead to disorder and bloodshed. They saw in Spain an example of how widespread Communist agitation can plunge a country into civil war. They knew that Greece needed all her strength to preserve her integrity in the struggle that was already developing for the mastery of Europe. And they knew that there was no time to deal with the threatened strike by summoning the Committee or the Chamber to authorise special measures, because futile argument and party manœuvring might have persisted for weeks, with still no solution at the end.

In April, Demertzis had been succeeded by the Deputy Prime Minister, General John Metaxas. The General was not a professional politician. He had been a capable soldier and a supporter of King Constantine, had tried to counter the misrule of the 1922 Revolutionary Committee,

and had shown always a consistent loyalty to both the monarchy and the State. So that when, on August 4th, he asked King George to sign decrees dissolving the Chamber, proclaiming martial law and suspending certain articles of the Constitution that affected the personal liberty of the subject, the King knew well that he would not have been asked to sign had there been any alternative but a general paralysis of the country that would develop into nation-wide uprisings.

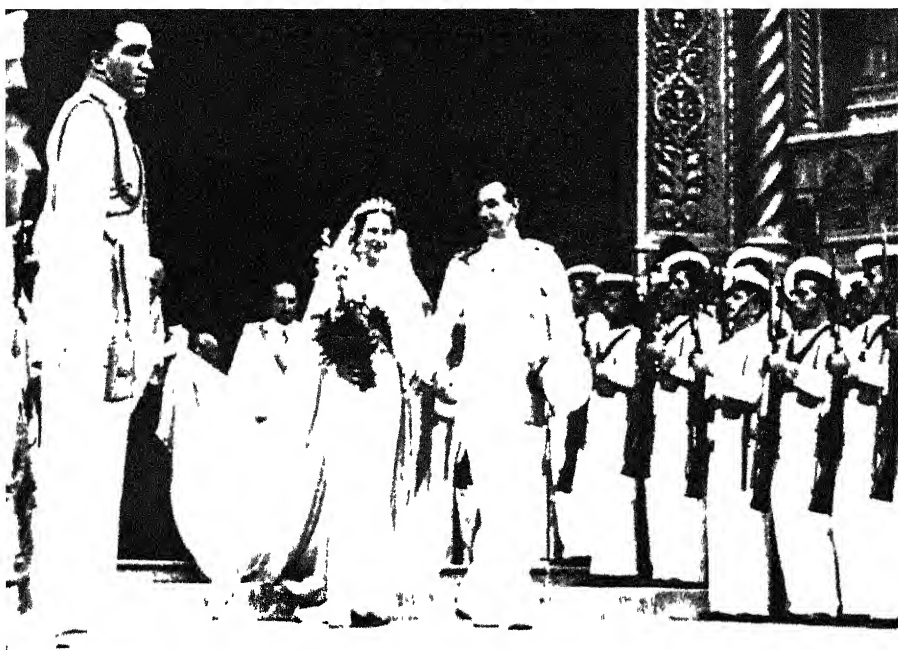
Indication of such a possibility had already been given in May, 1936, when, in acclaiming the success of a general strike in Salonika, where a state of anarchy persisted for twenty-four hours, the official Communist newspaper in Athens wrote: "From now on Greece will know no order or peace so long as the monarchy is in power, never mind how much proletarian blood may be shed. From now on the people throughout the country must pour into the streets . . . must seize power." On July 31st a committee of Communist deputies visited the office of the Prime Minister and stated that if the Government did not abandon its measures for compulsory arbitration of labour disputes, they would call a general strike for an indefinite period, and would fight on the pavements until their demand was accepted. The potentialities of the situation were known well enough in Britain, for as a *Times* leading article wrote on August 6th, "The Greek Communist Party are in close touch with the Macedonian Federalists and other dangerous subterranean organisations in the Balkan peninsula". With all these menaces to guard against, it is difficult to conceive what course Metaxas could have adopted, other than the one he took. And yet most of the world has since regarded his decision as improper.

Of all the acts of King George's reign, his support of Metaxas was to bring him the most odium, especially in Britain and America, where he was subject in later years to virulent and ill-informed criticism. These critics were of course secure in their remoteness from realities. For what other choice had the King? No normal constitutional action could have been sufficiently quick and powerful to stop a subversively inspired explosion that might

have produced another Spain. The King perhaps considered rejecting the Metaxas proposals, but the General had the Army strongly behind him, and might, rather than have agreed to weakness towards the Communists, have challenged the King's position. Abdication or the dismissal of Metaxas would have split the country, which again might have meant civil war, or at the best surrendering Greece to an extremist group. By accepting Metaxas's proposals as an emergency measure—which is how they first appeared—the King knew he could at least act as a moderating influence and as a centre around which all parties might eventually rally.

By all his actions since his return, King George had shown that his residence in England inclined him strongly towards an exact and patient constitutionalism in internal troubles. All who knew him are sure that he would not have supported Metaxas's assumption of extra-parliamentary powers had there been any other way out. He examined the situation with the objectiveness conferred by long absence from Greek political influences, and was convinced that the threat of a general strike was real, that its consequences might bring the country to its knees, and that foreign interference would follow, for Italy and Bulgaria would have indeed been happy to intervene in a civil war provoked by Communism.

Metaxas's action was the result of a sudden decision to solve a desperate situation by a desperate remedy. He assumed the minimum of power necessary to resist both internal and external danger, and declared that the nation must set aside party strife, submit to discipline, and put national well-being and efficiency before personal liberty. He declared, too, that he would not relinquish power until that national well-being had been achieved. Henceforward, until the day of his death, he ruled as a dictator. Besides being Premier, he held the portfolios of Foreign Affairs, War, the Marine and the Air. The rest of his Cabinet consisted partly of specialists and partly of experienced retired officers. Greece became, in effect, a totalitarian country, although the identities of the progressive parties were never suppressed, and, as compared with all other



Wedding of Princess Irene to the Duke of Spoleto at Florence in 1939 Bottom group L to R King George II, Prince George of Greece, the Duke and Duchess, Queen Helen of Roumania, Crown Prince Paul



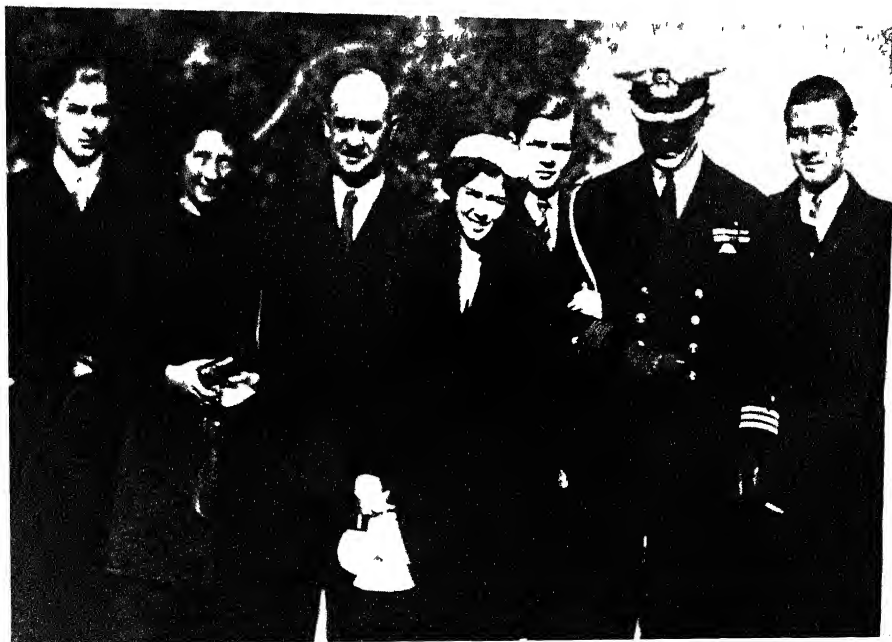


Crown Prince Paul walks Athens immediately after the restoration of the monarchy



Crown Prince Paul in flying kit with his instructor, Wing Commander Potamianos

Crown Prince Paul and Princess Frederica with her parents, the Duke and Duchess of Brunswick, and her four brothers



dictatorships, its control was mild. Some political opponents were banished to the islands, where they were unable to create mischief, but none was "liquidated" in the manner of 1922, or of other dictatorships in Europe.

The Premier soon showed that he intended to use his power for the benefit of the community, for he introduced a programme of sweeping social reforms linked to measures for the wide development of industry and the reorganisation of the armed forces. But to secure his position and to keep out foreign influences, he imposed a Press control and developed a security organisation—actions that were, in fact, little more than an extension of the vigorous measures to which some of his predecessors, including Kondylis, and even Venizelos, had been forced by a politically unstable people with no tradition of self-control. In Britain and America the Freedom of the Press is something that is prized very jealously, but, in return, the Press, in general, subjects itself to reasonable restraints. In Greece the standards of journalism were not always so high. Newspapers could be bought and bribed, as had happened in the 1914-18 war. Writers used their powers brazenly and recklessly to provoke disorder and bloodshed. Metaxas's action in keeping a strict control of the Press was therefore not comparable with similar action in Britain or America, especially as he was thereby enabled to avoid the diplomatic embarrassment that would have been caused by too outspoken criticism of foreign Powers—a factor which the leader of a small, feeble State had to consider.

As a soldier attuned to German military strategy, Metaxas well understood the dangers that loomed not only over middle Europe, but also over the Balkan countries and the Near East. Germanophile as he was, he had no intention of compromising with either Italy or Germany. Even his opponents recognised this determination, for when Italy exposed her ambitions by seizing Albania in April, 1939, the Greek exiles in Paris, headed by General Plastiras, were moved to declare that, in view of the perils that threatened Greece, they withdrew their opposition to Metaxas.

Meanwhile security measures were intensified, especially censorship of the Press, for Metaxas did not intend to

permit a repetition of 1914-15, when German and Entente propaganda in the Athens papers helped to split the country. His problem was made no easier by the outwardly friendly relations that he and many leaders of both political and business life still maintained with a Germany that had now become Greece's best customer, and that supplied her in return with armaments and heavy material for public works. Many thousands of Greeks depended for their livelihoods on friendly relations with Germany, for Great Britain's 1940 War Trade Agreement came too late to loosen the Nazi grip at which she had previously connived. The Premier, with an eye on the way that Germany overran small European States on the flimsiest pretexts, had to take every military precaution short of actual mobilisation, and at the same time avoid every sign of Greek hostility that would excuse Axis action against her. The delicacy of the diplomatic situation during this period amply justified the attitude of strict neutrality demanded of the Press but obtainable only by enforcement.

That there was but little disturbance in the country as the war developed was due in part to the thorough supervision of the regime, but it also resulted from a general recognition of the advantages of a strong control in the face of external dangers. Liberals and other possible critics held their voices, because they realised that there was no one else able or willing to take the place of Metaxas. It is possible, too, they recognised that under his leadership, and that of King George, Greece had become regenerated.

Throughout the five years that preceded the Italian attack, the King, no less aware than his Prime Minister of the perils ahead, helped in his constitutional capacity to prepare for them. Before his return he had realised the implications of the steady deterioration in the international scene. From the first he stressed the need to strengthen the country's military forces. As soon as Metaxas's Government gained the power to act, the King concentrated his attention on reorganising the armed forces. The length of military service was increased, training and discipline were improved, full-scale manoeuvres were held for the first time since 1911, supplies of all war material, from uni-

forms to aeroplanes, were increased, and defence works were constructed along the Eastern Macedonian frontier. The Navy and the Air Force shared in all these improvements.

As the war went its disastrous way for the Allies, and as the moment of trial for Greece drew nearer, the King seemed to grow in stature and distinction. His calm, decisive personality, linked with the national consciousness of order, discipline and preparedness, gave the country an immense confidence, and caused the Crown to become a rallying point for every section of the population, including those who might have declined to support Metaxas alone. Thus when the Italians struck, the Greek defences leapt into instant and effective action, with the full backing of a united nation that acted as one unit. Under the King's leadership, Greece rose to a peak of unanimous courage and self-sacrifice that astonished the world, no less than her enemies.

For Italy thought that her victim would offer not even a token resistance to her demands. Greece could expect no help, other than from a sadly weakened Britain, which, with her European army vanquished, grimly awaited invasion. France was down and out. Russia was not only holding the German hand in Poland, but actively, indeed anxiously, helping her with supplies. What hope had Greece against such odds? Even in Britain her defiance evoked astonished admiration rather than expectation of success, for the average Britisher had little knowledge of Greece and no great respect for the Greeks, whom as a nation he regarded as politically unreliable, or, as individuals, mainly as a verbose, unshaven people addicted to sharp commercial practices. The struggle against Italy changed these vague impressions, and gave the Greek people an heroic stature that the modern State had achieved never before, and the ancient city-states only in semi-legendary episodes.

How different would have been the situation if the old habits of political stalemate and subversively provoked social troubles had continued. The hands of King and Government would have been powerless when the time came for action. And even had it been possible to accept

the challenge under such conditions, how long could Greece have fought if she had been tunnelled and weakened with the kind of disease that brought about the humiliating collapse of that classic democracy, France, as soon as her crucial test began? For that Metaxas, a man of seventy years, when confronted in the middle of the night with the contemptuous Italian ultimatum, possessed the resolution to give his unequivocal "No!", came partly from the instinctive reaction of self-respect that most Greeks would have felt at such a demand, but even more from his knowledge that the country had the capacity to resist. Sheer unity of public sentiment alone would have been ineffective without military preparedness and efficiency, which included skilled leadership. Unanimity of patriotic fervour had not enabled the Greeks to beat the ill-armed Turkish Army in 1922. But now, with the King's aid, Metaxas had built up a national army, with healthy morale, not split in either upper or lower ranks by irreconcilable political passions. He had himself selected the men to direct and lead it, and events were strongly to justify his choice. He was in full accord with the King, who alone, under the Constitution, could say yea or nay to war. Confident in his position, he was able instantly to reject the Italian ultimatum. Within a few hours the Greek Army, already partly in readiness, was on its way to the front. How strikingly the immediate unsheathing of the sword by a nation united under its King compared with the divisions and weaknesses of 1914!

The Greek entry into the war, and her defiant struggle, heartened Britain in her hour of adversity, and provided a spur to morale at a moment when it might have weakened under the successive blows that had culminated in Dunkirk. And from Hitler's confidential correspondence with Mussolini it is known that General Franco was encouraged by the Greek defensive not to surrender Spain's neutrality for the German assault on Gibraltar. But these results of the Greek decision to fight were not the only services she was to render to the Allied cause, for they were out-matched by her later decisions to stand against the Germans.

That Greece, as personified by the King and Metaxas, intended to resist if Germany attacked was made clear long

before the German offensive. As far back as March, 1940, Prince Peter, in sounding Metaxas about the creation of a Liaison Section of the General Staff, and not then knowing where Metaxas's sympathies lay, was told, "If we have to fight, we shall fight with the Anglo-French". The General had been an admirer of the German military machine all his life, but he knew and declared that sentiment could not count in war, that Greek concerns were maritime, not continental, and that Greece was tied to England by their common Mediterranean interests.

But firm as was his attitude, Metaxas did not want to provoke invasion unnecessarily. The German attitude, as expressed through their Minister in Athens, was that they regarded Italy's invasion from Albania with contempt, that the campaign had been undertaken without Hitler's foreknowledge or agreement, and that Germany would never join in an onslaught on so gallant a country, save only if the British landed troops and established bases on the Greek mainland. The Premier was not deceived by this. He was sure the Germans would march when it suited them. But a war postponed is a war that has not taken place, and so he tried to stall off the evil day. He would do nothing that gave the Germans an excuse for attack, and in this attitude was supported strongly by his General Staff. That is why the R.A.F. was not permitted to operate against the Italians from airfields in the Salonika plains. That is why, in January, 1941, General Wavell's offer of British help was declined: firstly because the arrival of a British army might provoke German reaction, and secondly, the force suggested was far too small to oppose a strong thrust, for most of the Greek troops were committed to the war in Albania, and the few remaining formations were adequate only for screening the Macedonian frontier.

Later in January, Greece suffered a greater shock than ever the Italians gave her, for Metaxas died suddenly, following an operation on his throat. Although the plump little dictator was not popular, the news hit Greece hard, for the inherent disadvantages of a dictatorship showed immediately. There was not one man in Greece of the same calibre to take his place, none with the personality and

prestige to direct the country through the dire troubles ahead.

"It is no use pretending that the loss of this powerful man is not a severe blow to the Allied cause," said Harold Nicolson, M.P., broadcasting on the B.B.C. on January 29th. "When he came to power in 1936 he found Greece torn by internal strife and doubtful of her own future. Within a few years he was able to galvanise the country to a sense of its own traditions and power, and to face the greatest ordeal which even Greece in her troubled history has ever had to face, and with a united country behind him. We here in England must salute with respect the passing of so great a man."

These words were echoed by *The Times* on the following day: "It was his and his country's good fortune that Metaxas was called by King George II in 1936 to restore the political structure, which had become alarmingly chaotic, and above all, to revive the spirit and discipline of the Greek Army, which had been shaken by political faction and by consequences of the disastrous campaign in Asia Minor."

In later years the good that Metaxas did for Greece and for the world has been forgotten in the fact that the harmony he gave the Greek nation for a few years was enforced. While preparing for war he gave the country tranquillity, employment and improved living conditions, though these benefits counted for little with thousands of politically sensitive people who chafed against an infringement of the Constitution that prevented them from indulging in their verbal hair-splittings and political stalemates. With the perspective that time bestows, we can now appreciate that issues greater than the personal freedom of the individual Greek were at stake on August 4th, 1936. And even at the time the work Metaxas had achieved was appreciated by some, not the least in England, where his death was marked by the unique gesture, for a foreign statesman, of the official flying of flags at half-mast.

After a short delay, King George found his next Prime Minister, Koryzis, a well-meaning man who had been Minister of Public Welfare, and who accepted his great

responsibilities with some hesitation. But it was the King who guided the Premier's decisions, and replaced Metaxas as leader. From then on, his control of affairs was both continuous and decisive. It was fortunate that he was so well equipped to provide the indomitable, high-motivated leadership that was needed, for with Metaxas's death there was a weakening among the higher military ranks and the politicians, who knew that the Army was nearing the end of its fortitude, and who consulted their fears. But, stiffened by the King's resolve, the new Government reaffirmed Metaxas's decision to resist German attack, and called on Britain to state what help she would give.

In February Mr. Eden and General Dill, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, accompanied by other officials and their staffs, flew to Athens and held a conference in the Tatoi Palace, a conference in which the King played a dominant part. For political reasons Britain had to offer help, and in the long run her intervention, costly though it was, paid her a great dividend. But at that time this result could not be foreseen. The British wanted Greece to resist, whatever the consequences, and it was the task of the British party to ensure that she did so by persuading the Greeks that our aid would be reasonably effective. Unhappily, there are indications that the measure of our assistance, as represented at the Tatoi meetings, was exaggerated.

"I think it was Eden who stressed and enumerated the 'formidable' resources which we were prepared to send over," related General de Guingand,* who was present as a member of the military planning staff. "It sounded pretty good. . . . Totals of men and guns are generally impressive. . . . My first manpower figures excluded such categories as pioneers, and in the gun totals I only produced artillery pieces. This was nothing like good enough for one of Mr. Eden's party who was preparing the brief. He asked that the figures should be swelled with what, to my mind, were doubtful values. I felt that this was hardly a fair do, and bordering upon dishonesty.

" . . . in these conversations," continued General de

* *Operation Victory.*

Guingand, "the King appeared to take a leading part, and he certainly impressed me with his attitude, and knowledge of the problems discussed." But King George needed no persuasion, other than the assurance of adequate help. Whatever doubts General Papagos, the Greek Commander-in-Chief, and his Staff may have had, were overruled by the higher impulses of honour. The result was satisfactory—to us. De Guingand describes how the British party came from the council room to the ante-room where he was waiting. "Eden came in looking positively buoyant. He strode over to the fire and warmed his hands, and then stood with his back to it, dictating signals to his staff. They in turn looked nearly as triumphant as he did, and were positively oozing congratulations." * British blandishments had prevailed, Greece had responded to an appeal to her honour, and she was committed to the fire, as were soon to be 60,000 British troops.

The King's leadership was supported unquestioningly by the great majority of the people. There were many pro-German voices, but they were never heard aloud. The country's extraordinary spirit of resistance and sacrifice was movingly expressed in the declaration of an Athens newspaper: ". . . this little nation, which has taught all other nations how to live, will now teach them how to die". The King and his people accepted their new ordeal without question or complaint, and without haggling for territorial and other advantage. "They did not bargain and they did not ask for a price. They entered this new battle unconditionally, expecting defeat, but content in our ultimate victory and good faith." †

But although none of those present knew it, this brave decision was only the second of the three that were to bring ruin and misery on Greece, but were to help save the world. For the decision to fight the Germans led to more than the short-lived Anglo-Greek military campaign in Greece. It produced the even more strategically significant decision of King and Government to defy the German demand for submission, and to continue the struggle from Crete. For

* *Operation Victory.*

† Harold Nicolson, *Spectator*, January 9th, 1942.

in Crete were fought the vital battles that lost Germany her precious airborne forces, whose graves now spread in wide Cretan cemeteries that are the graveyards of Germany's ambitions in the East. "Only when the war is won and the time-table of Hitler's aggressions is dragged into the full light of day," said a London newspaper, with unusual long-sightedness, "shall we be able to assess the true measure of the debt which the cause of civilisation and liberty owes to the Greek King and his nation." *

As we now know from German documents produced at the Nuremberg trial, the Greek repulse of the Italian invasion forced Germany to make what proved to be a vital diversion from her plan of attack against Russia. Hitler could not risk so immense an undertaking with an open flank. Nor could he leave the R.A.F. in possession of Greek bases from which it could attack the oilfields of Roumania, whose security was always one of his principal worries. The attack on Russia had been provisionally fixed for the middle of May, the earliest date on which weather conditions would permit offensive operations, but on April 1st Hitler and his staff decided on a five-weeks postponement. This delay was to be a primary cause of the failure to reach the Caucasus, and to overrun the Middle East.

Had the attack opened in mid-May, the Germans would almost certainly have gained their objectives before the onset of the winter weather, especially if they had been able to use their best spearhead troops, the Parachute Division and the airborne formations. But these men and their aircraft had been ruthlessly sacrificed in the effort to finish off the Crete affair in time for the troops engaged in Greece to return to Bulgaria and Roumania for June 22nd—the scheduled zero-day for the attack on Russia. So heavy were the losses of the parachute formations that they had completely to re-form, and took no effective part in the Russian campaign until late September, when they operated unsuccessfully in the Crimea. The wounds of Crete had left their mark too deeply for the new formations to repeat their former triumphs.

* *Daily Telegraph*, leading article, October 31st, 1941.

The absence of these forces undoubtedly hindered Germany's rapid penetration of Russian territory, and many thousands of Russian lives were saved by the Greek and British troops who surrendered theirs in Greece and Crete. But Russia's benefit did not end here. Part of the German air and airborne forces were to have been used to help overrun the Middle East countries, where, backed by the Luftwaffe and aided by an accommodating Vichy Syria, they were to have sustained carefully synchronised risings by rebellious elements in Iraq and Persia. But for the struggle in Greece and Crete, the month of May would have seen the Axis controlling, with a comparatively small number of air-transported personnel, the whole of the vast area from the Levant to the borders of India. Cyprus, which was then practically defenceless, could have been easily seized by airborne forces. In Egypt we should have been attacked from the east as well as from the west. Our Iraq and Persian oil supplies would have been lost. Turkey, surrounded, would have been compelled to compromise with the enemy. And the southern supply route to Russia from the Persian Gulf, by which were sent the five million tons of aeroplanes, armour, transport and other equipment, which enabled her to stage her offensive later, would never have existed.

The Iraq rising took place, but the Germans could not get there in time to support it. That the Greek and Cretan battles saved us by a margin of only a few days is no exaggeration. The author served in Headquarters Middle East during the anxious period that followed Crete, when the situation was so tense that from hour to hour we expected to hear that Iraq rebels had captured the only British stronghold, the R.A.F. Flying Training School at Habbaniya. Here improvised bombing by the staff and pupils, among whom were Greek Air Force personnel under training, was the key-factor of resistance. The public in Britain, concerned with their own immediate troubles, did not realise how close was the Middle East to disaster in this desperate period, and have never really recognised Greece's share in saving the situation. But for the self-sacrificing courage of this tiny country the Battle of Britain might have been

fought in vain. And even the Greeks themselves do not always appreciate their King's part in the making of decisions that helped vitally to save the Allies from defeat.

To King George it was the irony of his life that he should be remembered by so many people, including some of his own subjects, not for having guided the Greek nation in a time of desperate confusion to a role of world esteem and honour, but for his connections with the disliked regime of order and discipline that made possible such high achievement. As for the far-reaching effects on the course of the war that followed the decisions to fight Germany in Greece and Crete, the King preferred to assume no merit, because his mind was then occupied only with the task of defending the integrity of Greece.

CHAPTER VI

“ . . . AND HELD HIGH THE TORCH . . . ”

THE Italian forces crossed the Albanian frontier into Greece in the early hours of October 28th, 1940. They moved in leisurely fashion, apparently expecting abject surrender or rapid collapse by the ill-equipped troops of a normally disunited people. The attack took the form of two main thrusts, one eastwards towards Florina and Salonika, and the other southwards into Epirus towards Janina. In Epirus the Greeks withdrew slowly over the Kalamas River to the Acheron, but on the other front they advanced towards Koritza, just inside Albania. There was also fighting in the regions between the two sectors, where Italian mountain troops, the Alpini, advancing into the Pindus gorges, were trapped by the Greeks on the ranges above. Within a fortnight the Italians were on the defensive, and had lost several thousand prisoners. By the middle of November the Greek troops, supported by the British and Hellenic Air Forces, were on the offensive along the whole front. The first phase was over, the dual thrust had failed.

The second part of the campaign, which covered the period from November 17th to April 6th, consisted almost entirely of a persistent Greek offensive. Superior tactical direction by the Greek General Staff, boldly applied by the local commanders, and drawing a magnificent response from the hardy, resolute troops, soon produced striking results. On November 22nd the Italians gave up Koritza, and with it large stocks of military equipment and supplies that helped the Greeks to press their attacks with even greater vigour. They advanced into Albania on four fronts: firstly across the Kalamas River and up the coast to the Italian supply base of Santa Quaranta, opposite Corfu; secondly from Janina through Argyrokastro and

down the valley towards Tepelini; thirdly, from Klisura in the direction of Berat, and fourthly from Florina along the road to Koritza and Pogradets, both of which were captured.

Although the Italians managed to hold Tepelini, the capture of Argyrokastro was followed shortly by that of Khimara, a Greek-populated town on the coast twenty-five miles north of Santa Quaranta, a success that put the Greek armies, after only two months of war, in possession of more than a quarter of Albania. The capture of these towns in quick succession raised both military and civil morale to fever heat. But the most spectacular successes were now over, as the severe winter weather slowed up all operations. Lack of transport greatly hampered Greek mobility, most of their supplies and ammunition being carried by men and women, with dogged tenacity, over narrow mountain tracks. Aircraft dropped supplies when weather and other conditions permitted, but these efforts could meet only emergency needs.

In 1941 Greek pressure recommenced, but the advance was slow and difficult. Early in January Klisura was taken, but for some weeks afterwards the icy ferocity of the weather, with its high incidence of frostbite casualties, paralysed all but purely minor operations. Air activity continued spasmodically on both sides, Italian bombers aiming their attacks mostly against towns and villages well behind the war area, while the R.A.F. and what was left of the R.H.A.F. concentrated their attentions on Italian ports and other supply targets.

From the first days of the campaign the Royal Air Force had taken an active part in the war, earning the gratitude of the Army and everywhere the enthusiastic approval of Greek civilians. As the campaign progressed the strength of our air contingent increased, and more up-to-date aircraft were provided. Some striking successes over the Italians, including the red-letter day in February when twenty-seven Italian aircraft were destroyed without loss to our own formations, established a decided air supremacy across the whole front. The Greeks felt a particular bond of sympathy with the R.A.F. because we shared in their glorious hour of victory.

As the winter months passed, the Italians mounted a new offensive in Albania, and in March Mussolini graced with his presence what was meant to be an all-conquering drive into Greece. Greatly reinforced, the Italians pressed their attack for a week against an unyielding Greek defence. Italian losses are stated to have been 25,000 out of a total of 120,000 men. At the end of the attack the exhausted enemy was pushed back beyond even his original lines. This was unhappily the last big success to come to the stubborn Greek armies in the mountains. From now on the centre of the country's anxieties shifted towards the Macedonian frontier threatened by Germany.

Those of us who were in Greece at this time sensed, perhaps then unknowingly, the atmosphere of high resolve that held the whole country. This reaction to invasion came instinctively from a spirited people, but we had little doubt that much of it was inspired by the person of the King, and what he represented as the leader of a united Greece. We in the Air Force knew something of the load of responsibility that the King carried, especially when Metaxas died. His routine of daily conferences with his Ministers and Chiefs of Staff, and with D'Albiac, the British R.A.F. commander; his visits to Greek and British units; his momentous later meetings with high British officials and commanders—all gained for him in the eyes of those who were near him an admiration that for most of us never afterwards faded. There was nobody who came into contact with King George at this time, and indeed during the whole period of the war in Greece and Crete, who did not praise him.

In all his work he had close beside him, sometimes just as a quiet listener, withdrawn into the background, sometimes eagerly occupied in more active service roles, his brother, Paul, the Crown Prince. A naval officer by training and preference, the Crown Prince was usually seen in Athens in the uniform of a naval captain, but for his numerous visits to the front he wore Army uniform. His wife, the Crown Princess Frederica, we often saw busily engaged in those hospital and welfare activities which had already won her the affection of the people. It was a

tribute to her character that one never thought of her as a German, nor heard any word said about it, so completely had she gained the goodwill of the Greeks. Other ladies of the family—Princess Katherine, and Princess Aspasia and her daughter, Princess Alexandra—all shouldered tasks of welfare for Greek troops, and all earned our liking and respect for the way they did their work.

Among the young Air Force pilots who came to Athens for their brief breaks in the routine of flying against the Italians, the most popular member of the Royal Family was probably Princess Katherine, whose open, vivacious and unaffected character made her many friends. The Princess joined the Greek Red Cross in 1939, and had worked continuously since, on exactly the same routine, including operating-theatre work, as other qualified nurses. She was thus well acquainted with the more brutal realities of war, the woundings, maimings and illnesses that most civilians never saw because such unpleasanties disappeared into the hospitals. Most nurses were able to endure the strain of such work only because their attitude to the wounded they tended was impersonal. But in the early days of the war, before the R.A.F. had established their own hospital, and our casualties were taken to the hospital in which Princess Katherine worked, she found sometimes that she had to tend the broken bodies of Air Force men whom she knew and with whom she had jested on social occasions in Athens.

These contacts inevitably brought the darker meaning of war very close to her. Such an example was the first R.A.F. officer casualty in the war, who was brought to the Red Cross hospital, and who, whilst convalescing there, formed a friendship with his Princess nurse. After he had recovered, Princess Katherine used occasionally to see him. One morning he telephoned her at the hospital, explained that he had a job to do but was coming into Athens afterwards, and asked if she would have tea with him. Her duties over, but still in her uniform, Princess Katherine went with her Lady-in-Waiting, Miss Mary Athenogenes, to the lounge of the King George Hotel. She waited, with growing impatience, but her pilot friend never turned

up. Returning to the hospital, she learned that the "little job" of which he had spoken was a hazardous operational flight, and that he had indeed come into Athens afterwards, but in an ambulance, gravely wounded. While the Princess had waited in the hotel for him, he had died.

The member of the Royal Family most intimately known to the British Forces was Prince Peter, in his role as Chief Liaison Officer. Before the war there was no Liaison Office in Greece, but in 1939 Prince Peter, while passing through Paris on his way to rejoin his regiment in Greece, saw how usefully the Duke of Windsor filled the role of Chief Liaison Officer with the French Army, and later proposed to General Metaxas that Greece should possess a similar organisation. When the war opened, Prince Peter, after a spell with his regiment, was transferred to the General Staff and put in charge of liaison, working closely with Lieutenant-Colonel Jasper Blunt, the British Military Attaché, and later with the British Military Mission. Prince Peter found that the main problem in liaison was not the difference of language, but the harmonising of dissimilar psychological outlooks and conflicting national interests, and he tells amusing examples of how these differences were reconciled, or sometimes not reconciled. One of these incidents arose during the first days of the war, out of the Greek lack of anti-tank weapons.

Called up at midnight by the Greek General in charge of the 4th Bureau (Military Supplies), Prince Peter went to General Gambier-Parry, Chief of the British Military Mission, to interpret an urgent request that 10,000 Molotov anti-tank "cocktails" should be flown over at once from Egypt to deal with an imminent Italian tank attack on the Epirus Front. "But," protested Gambier-Parry, lighting his pipe, "we don't use such things in the Western Desert, and even if we had any, they're too dangerous to be flown over. Why not make them here? All you need are empty bottles, petrol, tar and a bit of cinema film in each bottle." The Greek General protested at this attitude, and pointed out that the fate of Greece might depend on the supply of the "cocktails". But all Gambier-Parry would promise was some Boys anti-tank rifles. The General left,



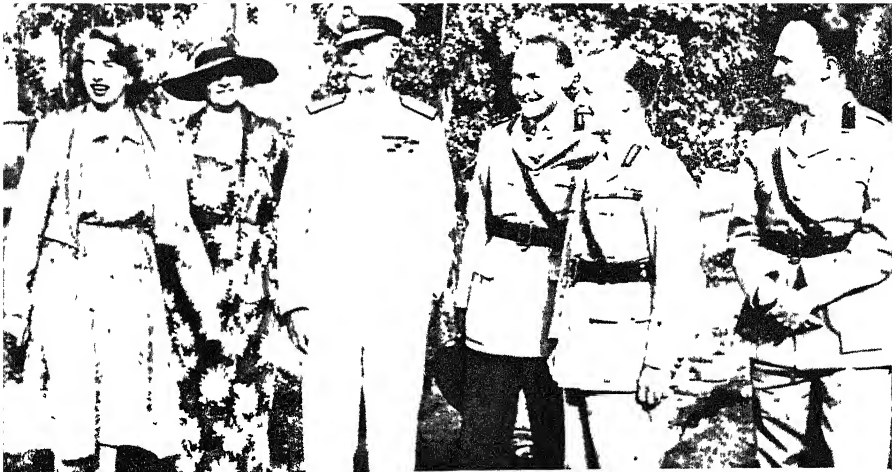
Princess Alexandra on Voluntary Aid Duties during the 1940-41 campaign



Crown Prince Paul visits a Greek Army Headquarters in Albania

King George in Council during the 1940-41 campaign L to R General Gambier-Parry, General Metaxas, the King, Air Vice-Marshal D'Albiac, General Papagos





safely in Cairo after escaping from Crete L to R Lt Ryan, Princess Katherine, Princess George, Prince George, Prince Peter, King George, Colonel Blount



King George at a Cairo conference L. to R Mr Casey, Minister of State, Lord Moyne, Air Chief Marshal Sir Sholto Douglas, General Sir Henry Maitland-Wilson, King George.

En route for South Africa. Crossing the Line.



hurt and disappointed. "They are impossible, these English!" he exclaimed bitterly in the corridor to Prince Peter. "So placid, so unresponsive; even danger cannot enliven them, because they are already practically lifeless."

But the anti-tank rifles were rushed from Egypt in a Wellington bomber. I happened to be the only passenger in the aircraft, and have since had pleasure in feeling that I possessed even this indirect link with the guns which, according to current British news statements, were rushed up to the Albanian front just in time to save the situation. According to Prince Peter, however, they never got beyond the Elevisis airfield, and the Italian tank attack at Kalpaki was repulsed by Greek "75's" used as anti-tank guns.

One of Prince Peter's duties was to keep the attachés of countries that were potential allies, such as Yugoslavia, Turkey and America, informed upon the war. Another section of the Liaison Office dealt in an opposite sense with potential enemies—Vichy France, Germany, Bulgaria and Russia. The Soviets were then still in alliance with Germany! That some of these people needed watching was shown by the incident of the French Archaeological School. The Vichy-French military attaché had agreed with Colonel von Clem, the German attaché, to send his wireless messages from the French School's premises. These messages, transmitted to the Japanese Consul-General in Alexandria, were sent on to the Italian General Staff, so providing them with reliable information about Greek operational movements. Once this carefully devised scheme was discovered, all the archaeological schools in Athens were closed.

It was not only in Greece that members of the Greek Royal Family were directly and indirectly engaged in the task of defeating the Italian enemy. There was one other taking his share of the fighting, not under the blue-and-white flag of Hellas, but under the White Ensign of the British Royal Navy. Once again the R.A.F. provided the link. The date was March 28th, 1941, when excitement ran high in R.A.F. Headquarters in Athens. The previous day a flying-boat based on Scaramanga had discovered part of the Italian Fleet steaming south-eastwards at a point

about 120 miles south-east of the toe of Italy. We realised that as soon as this news reached Cairo, Admiral Cunningham's Battle Fleet would start out across the Mediterranean at high speed in order to try to intercept the normally shy and elusive enemy, but we did not know that a group of the enemy had been contacted south of Crete early in the morning of the 28th, and that Fleet Air Arm aircraft, operating from the aircraft-carrier *Formidable*, and also from Maleme airfield in Crete, were attacking one section of the enemy, in order to try to delay their retreat sufficiently for our main force to close for engagement. What we did know was that a similar task was at once undertaken by the whole of the available bomber strength in Greece. For hours relays of bombers went out in unfavourable weather, and found and bombed another section of the enemy fleet. Two cruisers were reported hit, one amidships, and a destroyer sunk. There was great elation in Headquarters as the news of these successes were reported. Next day the world heard of the action of Matapan. We felt proud that our meagre forces in Greece, in turning aside for a day from their normal task of supporting the Greek Army in Albania, had contributed a little to Admiral Cunningham's brilliant victory.

One of the ships of the Battle Fleet that took a prominent part in the main night action was H.M.S. *Valiant*. Serving on board as a midshipman was King George's cousin, Prince Philip, later Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten, R.N., the first and only member of the Greek Royal Family to serve in the British armed forces in British uniform, and later as a British subject. His part in this action, and in other operations with the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean and the Pacific, is described in a later chapter.

In March the R.A.F. in Greece was joined by the first contingents of the Army reinforcement. General Wilson arrived, established his Force Headquarters at the Acropolis Hotel in Athens, and went forward himself to an Advanced Headquarters on the Olympus Line. In the work of liaison with the Greek General Staff and other Greek authorities, Prince Peter found his duties increased a hundredfold. Subsections of the Liaison Office were

placed with Advanced and Rear British Headquarters, Prince Peter working first in Athens and then, at the request of General Wilson, at Advanced Headquarters. By the time he reached them, however, Advanced Headquarters had retreated to Thebes, and he remained attached to the General's Staff.

The King, with Crown Prince Paul always by his side, became immersed in the heavy responsibilities that fell upon him after Metaxas died. He presided over all Cabinet meetings, and personally conducted negotiations with British Military representatives, as he had done in the past with D'Albiac. In the Staff Headquarters at the "G.B.", the King had a bedroom in the cellar, and here he spent many of his nights, as did General Papagos and other chiefs of the Greek General Staff. It was he who sustained and heartened a Government weakened by their fears of what lay ahead, and of a General Staff dismayed by the defection and subsequent overrunning of Yugoslavia, and by the smallness of the fighting strength of the British forces, for of the 58,000 British troops sent to Greece, barely 35,000 were in fighting formations, the remainder belonging to the supply and maintenance services.

It was the King who, more than anyone else, overbore pro-German manœuvres among certain Greek circles at this time. The Germans aimed their propaganda at those whom they knew were their friends, including former students in German universities, faithful admirers of Germany's archaeological research work in Greece, and business men whose entire trade was with Germany. To some extent their efforts were successful, but the inner core of the Government was under no illusions, and when the storm broke, pro-German influences were neutralised by the King's firm decision to come to no sort of terms with the enemy. The result was that the Greek people presented nearly as united a front to the German invasion as they had done to the Italian.

The German attack opened on April 6th. In Athens the people were subdued, for they realised the tragedy to which they were committed. Their mood was very different from that of the day of noisy celebration which

had opened the war against Italy, but it was resolute, and certain as to the rightness of the decision to fight. But rightness counts for nothing against force. Apart from the heroic resistance put up by the abandoned occupants of the fortifications in the mountain passes, the German initial advances met with little serious opposition.

As soon as it became clear to the public that this time the invader might not be held, a strong undercurrent of tension developed. So long as victory had attended the Greek armies in Albania, the direction of the State had gone forward without difficulty. But when the Albanian offensive halted and Greek troops were told to conserve their ammunition because help from America had not arrived; when the German attacks exposed the hopelessness of the Anglo-Greek defence; when senior Army officers of the Greek Army whispered their doubts about continuing the struggle, and leading politicians suggested negotiating for peace; this was the time when the great bulk of the nation, their elation over the Italian victories now overwhelmed by dread of approaching destruction, turned towards their trusted leader, the King, who almost alone during these distracted days remained calm and sure of himself.

Yet he knew full well that defeat was already in sight. After severe fighting by improvised British and Greek formations covering the approaches to Salonika, the Allied Forces fell back to their agreed defensive line along the River Aliakmon. Under continued German pressure, augmented by intense air attacks, the Aliakmon position became untenable, and a retreat, which only narrowly escaped becoming a rout, was made to the Thermopylae position. Deprived of its forward airfields, the Royal Air Force was compelled to concentrate on three stations in the Athens area, where it was quickly neutralised.

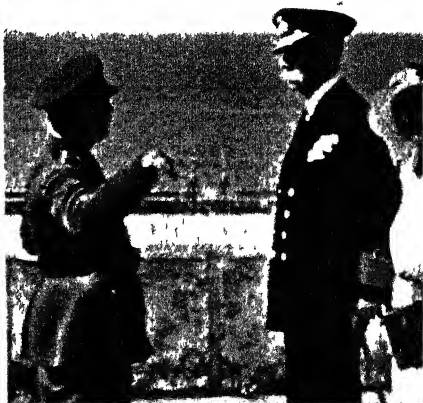
Once the decision was made to withdraw to Thermopylae, the end was obviously near—and this after only eight days' fighting. It was on April 14th that General Wilson had a meeting with the Greek Commander-in-Chief, General Papagos, who for the first time suggested that the British forces should evacuate Greece in order to avoid further futile fighting and equally futile devastation of the country.



King George inspects a Greek Armoured regiment, and pilots of a R.A.F. Squad in the Western Desert.



Prince Peter during an Air Raid in Crete



Prince and Princess George at Ca Harbour, Crete.



Princess Frederica and Princess Katherine at the Greek Sailors' Club in Capetown



Field Marshal Smuts acts as Godfather to Princess Frederica's baby, Princess Irene, seen in the arms of Princess Katherine.

Princess Katherine nursing in Wynberg Military Hospital, Capetown



News of weakening morale among some sections of the Greek Army had reached the King, who on April 15th issued an order of the day that was typical of the spirit of his leadership, and was also an inspiring contrast with an order issued in somewhat similar circumstances by the King of the Belgians.

“ The honour and interest of Greece and the fate of the Greek race preclude all thoughts of capitulation, the moral calamity of which would be incomparably greater than any other disaster. . . . It must not be forgotten that the British Army continues to fight in defence of the Greek soil.”

The Greek troops responded, but in Athens quisling forces began to stir. Mysterious unauthorised orders for leave and demobilisation were sent by Government departments to fighting formations. These and other apparent signs of treachery impelled the King to call for the Prime Minister and inform him that one of his colleagues had presumably been disloyal to the State and to Britain. The unfortunate Koryzis, a man of simple, upright character, did not seek to evade his responsibilities for these actions. He bowed silently to kiss the King's hand, and left. King George, worried by his manner, sent Prince Paul to the Minister's home to make sure he took no impulsive action. But the Crown Prince was too late. He arrived at the house to find that the Prime Minister had just shot himself.

This action, by an honourable man overcome by the desperation of the country's position as much as by the defections of one or more of his colleagues, came as a great shock to the people of Greece. Some members of the Government succumbed to the situation, and would not combine to help deal with the crisis. The King tried to appoint a new Premier, but all of those he approached refused to assume the responsibility. For three days the King stood alone, in a vortex of confusion, holding the control of the country in his unyielding hands, acting as Prime Minister, War Minister, Foreign Minister. For three days he barely slept, ate only in snatches, had never a moment's relief from his heavy burden. The man who

eventually accepted the post of Premier, M. Tsouderos, who was never a Monarchist in his sympathies, said of this time, "Only one of those whom I saw . . . like shadows around me during those three days of the 20th, 21st and 22nd . . . remained consistent, truly sincere, and resolved to do his duty to the end: that was the King." * Wrote another Greek, "I went home confused, dissatisfied and exhausted, but with a feeling of deep regard for His Majesty, who in those tragic hours which followed the collapse of the Koryzis Government, stood firm, scorned compromise, and held high the Torch of Greek resistance ". †

Koryzis committed suicide on April 18th. On the 20th General Wavell had an audience with the King, who, as acting Head of the Government, approved the decision that the evacuation of the British forces was essential. ‡ General Wavell did not mention in his Despatch that in order that the British forces could be safely evacuated, the King refused to consider even for a moment the German invitation to submit. To the end the Greek forces covered our evacuation, and even though General Tsolacoglou, commanding the Greek Armies in the Epirus, sought an armistice without the knowledge or consent of King and Government, Greek troops in Western Epirus held up the southward advance of the S.S. Motorised Division sufficiently long to enable many thousands of our men, who would otherwise have been trapped in the Athens area, to reach the Peloponnese and escape.

The Greek tragedy ended on a note of gratitude to Britain for our attempt to bring aid. All of us who took part in the evacuation knew well that no Greek voice was ever raised in complaint at the inadequacy of our help. On the contrary, we heard only expressions of shame that their Epirus Army had surrendered before we had all safely got away. Certainly our effort in Greece—the "Gal-lant Gesture" doomed to failure almost from its inception—was politically desirable from the British point of view,

* E. J. Tsouderos, *Speeches*.

† A. Michalopoulos, *Greek Fire*.

‡ General Wavell, Despatch on Middle East Operations, February to July, 1941.

but it is one in which we should take no undue pride, save for the gallantry of the men who fought, and of the Navy which rescued most of them from capture. There are some who agree with General de Guingand's view that we should have warned Greece that our help would be inadequate, and so given the King a chance to reconsider the decision he had already made to adhere to Britain and “to continue fighting on the mainland for as many days as possible, and then to remove to Crete in order to carry on the struggle from that island, which many at the time considered impregnable”.*

Perhaps King George and his people would still have wished to fight, with or without our help, as they had already declared they would. But in that event Britain would not have carried so heavy a responsibility for the miseries that followed a ruthless occupation, and for the opportunities that these miseries gave for disruptive elements to bring even greater miseries upon a spirited people. Nor did British responsibilities for Greek troubles end there, for, with a blindness to realities that now seems incredible, we did everything we could to destroy the one element of the Greek national structure that might have enabled the country during the occupation to stand united against its perils. That element was the Crown and the person of King George.

This was a fact that Hitler had the acumen to realise, for in a speech in Berlin on May 14th, 1941, he named King George as Germany's chief enemy in Greece. The first act of the quisling Government set up by the Germans in Athens was to “abolish” King George and the monarchy. The “Kingdom of Greece” became the “Greek State”. Later we British were, in an unbelievable twist of ingratitude, to do our best to confirm and implement the German judgment.

* A. Michalopoulos, *Greek Fire*.

CHAPTER VII

CRETAN ADVENTURE

IN anticipation of the British evacuation, certain withdrawals of Army and R.A.F. personnel had been made prior to April 21st, some troops returning to Egypt, others going to Crete to help build up a defensive force there. By the evening of the 21st all the Royal Air Force aircraft had gone except the fighters and the flying-boats engaged in evacuating high-ranking people. The remaining fighters went to the airfield at Argos, with the object of covering the evacuation, but most of them were quickly destroyed in low-flying German attacks. The few that were left were sent to Crete. On the morning of the 22nd the first waves of retreating troops were on their way to the assembly points near the ports and beaches selected for the evacuation. Men of the Air Force squadrons not already evacuated by air were sent to Argos to await their turn for evacuation from the port of Nauplia.

As already recorded, we in Athens knew that the unflinching attitude of the Government at this moment, when the whole country was collapsing, issued mainly from the moral courage and determination of the King. With the refusal to capitulate came the decision to carry on the struggle from Crete, for at that time no one thought it would be difficult to hold the island, and the possibility of an airborne invasion was not even considered. That the decision of the King and Government was right and honourable was not doubted for a moment by those who were near the situation. But later, when I read of statements in England, in which the King was accused of "fleeing" from Greece, I felt, like others who "fled" in the evacuation, angry at such distortion of the facts. The King and members of his Government stayed longer in Greece than many thousands of British troops. In the

evacuation, and afterwards, he ran risks that were naturally not to be appreciated by certain "gentlemen in England now a-bed".

On the 22nd the ladies of the Royal Household, including Princess Frederica with her children, and the Princesses Katherine, Aspasia and Alexandra, were taken to Suda Bay in a Sunderland flying-boat under the charge of Colonel Levidis. The flight was not without risk, as at any time they might have been intercepted by a roving German aircraft. Their luck held only until the Sunderland had alighted in the Bay, for a few minutes later the town and anchorage were subjected to a prolonged spell of bombing, including low diving attacks. Afterwards it was learned that the German Air Force had been informed by their agents in Athens that the King and Crown Prince were to be in the aircraft. Some of the party already ashore, including the Crown Princess and her family, spent an uncomfortable hour in slit trenches by the Naval Officers' Mess at Suda. The others, still in the flying-boat, forgot their comfort in the strain of waiting to be shot up. But they also escaped injury. A few hours later the whole party were on their way to Neapolis, in a fold of the mountains eastwards, where they were accommodated in a modest hotel. Levidis returned to Suda Bay, and flew back to Athens in the evening.

The next day, the 23rd, was appointed for evacuating most of the British Headquarters staffs. The R.A.F. Headquarters closed down during the afternoon, and D'Albiac and what was left of his staff, except myself, went over to Crete. Various senior officers of the Army were also evacuated, as were the Greek King and Government, who were thus only one of a number of high-level parties to leave for Crete that day. In the Sunderland, with the King, went the Crown Prince Paul, the Prime Minister Tsouderos, and Colonel Levidis. They landed at Suda Bay, carrying only small personal belongings.

Prince Peter remained in Athens with General Wilson until the eve of the German entry into the capital. This party moved at night to the Peloponnese, by-passing bombed and burning Corinth, already partly occupied by

the German parachutists who had dropped there the afternoon before. Encamping near Argos, they were subjected to German air attacks throughout the day, and had the mortification of watching the yacht by which they should have left that night sunk by an enemy bomber. But later in the evening a Sunderland flying-boat arrived, and in this, early next morning, the 29th, Wilson and his party, and others to a total of seventy-five, were flown safely to Suda.

The reason I had not accompanied D'Albiac to Crete was that I had been given the task of helping to evacuate some 2,000 men of the Air Force who were waiting restively in an improvised camp near Argos. The ships in which they should have sailed were sunk by bombing, and the airfield and main road near which they were encamped were attacked continuously from the air. They were, not unnaturally, getting out of hand, especially as most of their officers had, on the instructions of Middle East Headquarters, already flown to Crete with their aircraft. I arrived at the camp on the morning of the 24th to find that nearly all the remaining officers belonged to non-operational or non-executive branches, and in this unusual situation they were a little out of their depth. As there seemed no chance of getting away from Argos, which was already overcrowded with Army troops, and as the German Motorised Division from Janina was expected to put in an appearance the following day, I took the airmen in R.A.F. transport to Kalamata and Gythion, on the south coast. From these ports I sent about half the number in small vessels to the island of Kythera, from which the Navy later rescued them. The remainder in Kalamata were taken off in the naval evacuation a couple of nights later.*

I stayed behind with a small R.A.F. party, with which, on the night of April 28th/29th, I got away in a small fishing-boat packed with thirty-five British and Greek troops. Our margin of escape was one of minutes, for as we drew away from the coast we saw the dust of a German motor patrol descending the hill to the village of Kandili, from which we had just embarked. We reached Kythera

* An account of the Kalamata evacuation is given in the author's book *Special Duties* (December, 1946).

at dawn, and after hiding for the day in Kapsalis harbour, went on to Crete, arriving at Canae on the morning of April 30th. We were the last of the R.A.F., bar stragglers, to leave Greece, and among the last few hundred out of the 47,000 men evacuated.

In Canae I reported to D'Albiac, from whom I learned that he and his headquarters were not to be re-established in Crete, as we had all expected. A new and smaller R.A.F. Headquarters was to remain on the island, where it would be under the command of the redoubtable General Freyberg. Some of the R.A.F. personnel from Greece were to remain in the new defence formations, but the remainder of us were to go back to Egypt. D'Albiac had arranged to leave with General Wilson's party early the next morning, and he instructed me to go with him. After tidying myself up, I spent the rest of the day looking around the district. There were several alerts, and we heard the sound of falling bombs, but none came near us, as they were directed mostly against the Suda Bay area. It was during this short exploration that I again saw King George passing in a car with some Greek officers whom I did not recognise.

Told to spend the night in a camp at the flying-boat base at Suda Bay, I had dinner and was driven through the winding lanes that led to the base. In a chilly barrack hut I dropped into an uneasy sleep, from which I was called at about two in the morning, cold in spite of the blanket I had rolled around my uniform. With others I was guided in the unbroken darkness to a jetty, from where we were to be taken out to a flying-boat that had arrived during the night, and that now lay moored off-shore, invisible in the blackness. Because of the risk of bombing, there was not a flicker of light to help us move around, and it was with difficulty that we were able to see who was who, and also to avoid stepping into the water.

As dim figures stumbled by the edge of the wooden pier, some carrying hand baggage and small packages—for everything else had to be left behind—we suddenly heard a most unexpected noise: the cry of a baby, and the murmur of a woman's soothing voice. "What on earth are a woman and a baby doing here in this place?" we

asked our nearest neighbours, but nobody around me knew the answer. Then the sound of other feminine voices told us that several women were there, all speaking English. From my place on the jetty I could not discover who they were. We seemed to wait for hours before anything happened, and everybody except the baby relapsed into a dismal silence. Eventually a pinnacle arrived and we were told to embark in the *Sunderland*. The women were helped down, and the rest of us followed. The flying-boat windows were closely curtained, and no light showed, except a weak gleam from the carefully shielded door. We entered eagerly to find bright lights and luxurious seats, for we were being evacuated by a B.O.A.C. commercial plane engaged on one of the several hazardous tasks for which their pilots volunteered during those anxious days.

Once inside, we could identify the figures that had been unknown and indistinguishable in the darkness. The baby we had heard was Prince Constantine, carried in his nurse's arms. There was another child, the little Princess Sophie, carefully holding the hand of her mother, the Crown Princess Frederica. Crown Prince Paul was there with them, as were the Princesses Aspasia and Alexandra, the latter carrying her dachshund.

The seats of the flying-boat were soon filled by Wilson, D'Albiac and their staff officers. The appropriation of seats went by seniority, and I found myself just able to claim one. The slightly less senior officers retired to various hideouts at the stern of the craft, such as the luggage bunk and the lavatory, which were filled to overflowing with an assortment of representatives of the Army and Air Force. The two children seemed restless, and as soon as the engines were started up, commenced to cry. We taxied into the Bay and took off in the darkness, just before dawn. There were no lights to be seen from the town or shore, and the pilot had little to guide him. However, we were soon safely airborne, blissfully ignorant of the fact that even as we were taking off, the air-raid alarm had sounded, and less than ten minutes later bombs were falling on the base we had just left. We mounted steadily in a smooth swing round the western coast of Crete, and

Their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth





King George II inspects Greek Naval Guard of Honour at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, on the anniversary of the entry of Greece into the War.



King George II, King George VI and Mr. Churchill

King George II with Mr. Roosevelt



carefully drew the curtains to see the first soft flush of dawn beginning to break up the darkness. As we moved south-eastwards, the growing light picked up the mighty bulk of Mount Ida, in the centre of the island. I did not realise that six years were to pass before I should see that majestic peak again.

We flew on steadily. None of the exalted people around me seemed in the mood for conversation. Wilson's face was heavy and expressionless, and he settled himself at once for sleep. D'Albiac and some of the others read for a time. The discomforts of the past few nights at Kalamata made it easy for me to slide into a half-sleep, and as I did so I heard, above the noise of the engines, the renewed crying of the two children. I dozed fitfully most of the way across the Mediterranean, and each time I emerged into consciousness I seemed to hear one of the two children crying distressfully. "The poor little beggars don't like these excitements at their time of life," I thought. Eventually we approached the African shore and flew along the coast to Alexandria, alighting skilfully in the busy harbour.

The members of the Royal Family went ashore in motor launches belonging to representatives of the Greek community, by whom they were taken to the Greek Yacht Club overlooking the harbour. Most of the rest of us went for breakfast to the building next door, once the Italian Yacht Club, but now the Mess for the flying-boat squadrons. Here we learned that Prince Paul and his wife had changed their plan of going on with us to Cairo in the flying-boat, and intended to continue their journey by train. We understood that this was because the babies did not like flying, and this explanation is the one that I gave when I recorded the incident in my book, *Special Duties*. But I was wrong. Several years later, in Paris, talking over this experience with Crown Princess Frederica, she gave the real reason for the children's unhappy passage.

"I couldn't understand why they cried so much," she told me, "until, when we arrived at Alexandria, I found that their bodies were covered with little red marks, which frightened me terribly, as I thought they might have picked up some disease in the village in which we had stayed in

Crete. I sent for a doctor, who gave the children a quick inspection and then looked at me with embarrassment. I waited anxiously for the worst, thinking nervously of fevers and chicken-pox. 'Your Highness,' said the doctor, awkwardly, 'I cannot imagine how this has happened to their Royal Highnesses, but these marks are—well, er, simply bug-bites.'” Where the children had been bitten was a mystery. The hotel at Neapolis was small and not very clean, but had at least been free of bugs, while the night before the embarkation had been spent in the spotless and pleasant house of the Mayor of Canae. But whatever the source of the bites, Prince Constantine was ill for a week in Alexandria.

When King George arrived in Crete on the 23rd, he visited Neapolis, then went to live at the Villa Ariadne, the house which Sir Arthur Evans built many years before for the Knossos archaeologists, and later presented to the School of Archaeology in Athens. Here the King, accompanied by Princess Katherine, her Lady-in-Waiting, Miss Mary Athenogenes, Colonel Levidis and other members of the household and staff, were received by the curator, Mr. R. W. Hutchinson, and his mother, whose hospitality I had enjoyed in November, 1940, when flying from Egypt to Greece. The King had last visited Knossos in 1937, when he had surprised Hutchinson's mother by talking for a long time, and with detailed intimate knowledge, of the wild flowers of Scotland.

Feeling too isolated from events at the western end of the island, King George and his party moved on the 29th to Canae, where his Government was stationed. He stayed for a time in a four-roomed flat over the National Bank of Greece, and it was here that the Crown Prince and Princess and their family and the Princesses Aspasia and Alexandra had assembled for a meal on the evening of the 1st, before going down to Suda for the flying-boat. Prince George, the King's uncle, and his wife, Princess Marie, were also in Canae, and the manner in which the King and these members of the family started to settle down on the island is evidence of how they all at first thought that the Government would be established there indefinitely for the con-

tinuance of the war. But the German bombings, and the news of the accumulation of air transports and gliders on the Athens airfields, impelled General Freyberg to insist on all women being at once evacuated. After a week's bombing, Princess Katherine, in spite of her reluctance to leave her brother, was flown to Egypt in a Sunderland, in company with Prince and Princess George and other ladies of the Household. With King George remained now only Prince Peter, and, of course, Colonel Levidis, and other men of the King's entourage.

After a time the King moved his residence to a large house at Melacapina, in the plain north of Canae, owned by Mr. M. Manos, cousin of Princess Aspasia. Pre-occupied with the problems of the future, especially those arising from the aim of continuing the Government on Greek soil, the King became almost oblivious to the threat of invasion that loomed over the island. The Manos house is the largest in the district, and stands out noticeably in the plain, as I saw when I visited it during a brief trip to Crete in August, 1947. Madame Manos then told me how the King's example in selecting the house because of its size and amenities was followed during the occupation, when it was used by a succession of German generals. Because of its prominence, General Freyberg anticipated, rightly, that it might be made a special objective for parachutists, and decided to ask the King to move to a safer place. Prince Peter, who had been appointed to General Freyberg's staff soon after his arrival with General Wilson's Headquarters, was sent to ask the King if he would move into what was known as "The Perimeter", the guarded barbed-wire enclosure round Freyberg's Headquarters. This spot was bombed several times a day, and King George gave that as a good reason for staying where he was. When Prince Peter reported this decision, Freyberg appeared surprised.

"But the bombs are not dangerous!" he exclaimed calmly in the middle of a particularly heavy raid, in which there were thirty casualties among the clerks and guards. "Besides," he added, "it can't be helped if the King is killed. What we have to avoid is his being taken prisoner. Go back and tell him that!"

Prince Peter did so, only to find the King unimpressed. "If I can avoid being killed, I much prefer it, thank you very much," he said, laughing. "But I think I can also avoid being taken prisoner by moving to a house at the foot of the mountains."

Freyberg only agreed to this proposal after he had personally inspected the new refuge, a house in the hills beyond the village of Perivolia, south of Canae. It belonged to a Cretan of the old school named Captain Bolanis, an ardent Venizelist, who, as a partisan chieftain, had been a bitter opponent of King Constantine, but was now eager to help King George.

The evening of May 19th, the day before the attack, Prince Peter went to take tea at "the Palace", otherwise Bolanis's house, and was invited to spend the night there, as the King sensed something was going to happen, and thought his cousin was too isolated in his house on the coast west of Canae.

"I stayed," Prince Peter told me, "and never saw any of my belongings again. At half-past seven the following morning the King's valet brought hot shaving-water into the room in which we were both sleeping, and my cousin got up to shave. It was a fine, quiet morning, and I dozed on, waiting for him to finish before taking my turn. At 7.50 a single German plane circled the house, and then dropped bombs in the plain nearby. I jumped up to look out of the window with the King, and at the same moment heard Colonel Blunt, the British Military Attaché, who was also staying in the house, shout from the small balcony next door:

"'They are coming. I can see thousands of them!'

"He was looking out to sea, with a pair of field-glasses pressed to his eyes. A few seconds later the sky was crowded with aircraft. Bombing, straffing, diving, whining, with huge, slow-moving gliders among them, they were everywhere: over the sea, the coast, the plain, the house, the hills at the back and to the sides of us.

"'Telephone out of order, wires cut,' Colonel Blunt said, after ringing repeatedly on the field-set next to him. We decided we had better get out of the house, which,





Prince and Princess Peter of Greece

Princess Eugéne of Greece, and her children, Prince George-Andrew and Princess Tatiana



standing solitary on the hillside, was too obvious a target, so, picking up the few belongings we could carry, we started up the bare mountain path, one at a time, as quickly as we could make it. With us came gendarmes and a guard of a platoon of New Zealanders. Our objective was the Greek Army line at the top of the hill. Mules had been laid on for such an eventuality as this, but they didn't arrive in time.

"How we ever got there, I will never know. The planes flew so low above us, straffing everything they could find, that I could see the rear-gunners searching for targets. Then, before we got to the lines, parachutists started coming down, one group falling in front of us, another about five hundred yards behind. The latter group spotted us, and, getting into formation, opened fire. The New Zealanders returned the fire, as we did, too, with whatever we had. I used a Cretan rifle inlaid with mother-of-pearl, which Bolanis thrust into my hands when the attack began.

"Outnumbered, the parachutists took cover in a ditch and sent only pot-shots after us. No one was hit. As for the parachutists in front, they happily didn't discover us, and went away to our right westwards, towards the plain where we could hear the continuous noise of machine-gun and rifle fire. They had left their parachutes where they dropped, and moving steadily up the hill, with the New Zealanders forming a thin patrolling screen on the flanks, we soon arrived on the spot where these lay.

"But now fresh complications started. The Greek troops ahead of us, dug into rough trenches below the crest line of the hill, mistook us for the Germans who had alighted where we now stood. They opened fire on us and one of the gendarmes with us was hit in the ankle. I called in Greek to them, but they continued firing, and shouted that Germans speak Greek and wear Greek uniforms. Eventually, someone worked round to their flank and explained who we were. The firing stopped, and we entered their lines without further mishap."

Apart from the New Zealanders and their Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Ryan, and ten Greek gendarmes, the party consisted of the King, his equerry, Colonel Levidis,

and A.D.C., Wing-Commander Kinatos, Prince Peter, the Premier M. Tsouderos and his private secretary, the Governor of the Bank of Greece and the Minister of Information, Colonel Blunt, Bolanis and a friend, and finally the King's valet and cook, and Levidis's valet, an Irishman named John Terry.

Once in the defence lines the party paused to look at the scene. They watched more parachutists come down, some of them near the Manos's house in the plain, and saw the New Zealand Division destroy many groups of the enemy. Two donkeys were produced, on which the King and the Premier rode, and the party moved inland to Panaghia. Here in the school building they found a telephone still connected with Naval Headquarters at Suda Bay. Contact was made with Freyberg, who advised the King to go farther inland and await developments. It was now four o'clock in the afternoon, and after accepting refreshment from the villagers, the party set out for the village of Theriso, once a stronghold of Cretan rebels.

"It was a long walk to Theriso," Prince Peter related to me. "The King and the Prime Minister still rode their donkeys, but there were no other mounts available. We arrived at the village well after dark and put up in a peasant's house, where the King and I shared a room, badly infested with fleas. We were literally devoured, and although he managed to stick things out, I ended up on the floor in an effort to escape the tormentors in my couch. The New Zealand escort, very weary and hungry (the men were out of training in marching, which taught Freyberg a lesson he never forgot afterwards), was quartered in another house with ample supplies of cheese, bread and wine, which soon restored them to good humour.

"During the night stragglers arrived, including a mysterious young Jew who said he was a refugee from the mainland, and a tall, good-looking, old convict, still in his striped clothes, who told us he had spent twenty-five years in the Alikianos jail, and that he had just been liberated by the German parachutists who had taken over the prison as their Divisional Headquarters. He insisted that he was ready to fight the invader, and seized a gun that was lying

close. Colonel Levidis took him aside and explained tactfully that this was the King's escort and that he could therefore not remain with us. 'I know this is the King's escort,' the old fellow retorted; 'that is why I want to go with you! One man more will be of service to you!' I don't know what happened to this man, so full of life on his first day of liberty after all those long years in prison, but he didn't come farther with us, nor did the young Jew, of whom Tsouderos was very doubtful, suspecting that he was a fifth columnist sent by the Germans to trap us into capture.

"Early in the morning a man from Panaghia arrived with a telephone message from General Freyberg that we had better go on to Aghia Roumeli, on the south coast, a small village we had selected beforehand for just such an emergency. The battle wasn't going too badly, he said, and he had hopes of repelling the assault. So at six o'clock we set off for the south. Enemy planes were already circling high above us. I thought as I watched them that we hadn't seen an Allied plane since the R.A.F. left Maleme a week before.

"The walk up to Platanes (so called because of large plane-trees that grow at that spot) was uneventful. We had food with us from Theriso, and stopped to eat it in the shade of the towering trees. I had a shave and a wash in a trickle of water, but no one else could be bothered to do so. The King was calm, but seemed dispirited and didn't talk.

"We were now joined by Colonel Blunt, who had not come on with us in the morning, but had returned to Panaghia to try to find out more from Freyberg. He was exhausted, and when he had recovered, told us that the Germans had launched an attack in the direction of Suda, and were making desperate attempts to capture the Maleme airfield. Freyberg was getting ready to fight his way out of his surrounded Headquarters, and move down to Suda Bay.

"Our meal finished, we went on. Bolanis, the guide, took a south-easterly direction, which surprised me. Soon we started leaving the path completely and climbing over the most impossible rocks and shrubs.

"I talked it over with Colonel Blunt, and we came to the conclusion that Bolanis, after consulting Tsouderos, was leading us away from the direct road, in order to avoid the risk of running into parachutists at Omalo. This idea was not popular with the New Zealanders, who were becoming wearied by their heavy loads of armament, to the extent that Blunt and I both gave a hand by carrying rifles.

"After a most horrible walk, which cut open our shoes and completely exhausted us all, we stopped to rest at about four in the afternoon. We had a clear view of the strip of coast below us to the north, and suddenly someone shouted that he could see German planes landing on the Maleme aerodrome. Kinatos produced a pair of field-glasses, and, sure enough, there were swastika-marked aeroplanes coming down in quick succession, next to the burning carcasses of others. We realised that this was an event that would probably decide the issue of the battle.

"With heavy forebodings, we resumed the march. Three hours later we reached a pass, where Bolanis told us we were going to spend the night. To me, who had been to the Himalayas on expeditions, it seemed the height of folly to camp in a pass where the wind would freeze us at night. Moreover, we were all terribly hungry, and when Blunt came up to me and complained bitterly at the lack of food and shelter for the New Zealanders, I urged Bolanis to take us on to the first house beyond the pass. He wouldn't hear of it, as this meant another two hours' tramp. During this argument the King sat quietly on an outjutting rock, seemingly almost ill with fatigue.

"Blunt, Ryan and I decided to go and look for food. Luckily we found a shepherd who let us have a sheep and a little cheese. The latter we gave to the King, together with a tin of M & V which I had salvaged on leaving the house the day before; the mutton we boiled in a shepherd's cauldron, using snow from a nearby drift to produce water. One sheep for so many starving men was not much, but it was better than nothing. As the animal was slaughtered, I remember a New Zealander saying, 'I'm so hungry, I could drink its blood!'

"That night we *did* freeze. It was a very fine night, and in the small hours of the morning Allied planes from Egypt flew over us and descended to drop bombs on targets to the north. I recognised by the sound that they were British bombers—Wellingtons, I think. Wrapped up in a piece of blanket, I slept, or rather dozed, in a hollow scooped out of a patch of sand in the dry bed of a stream. The King also spent an uncomfortable night, covered with a sheepskin, and huddled in the shelter of a rock.

"At five o'clock the sun rose, and with daybreak came a most extraordinary panorama. From our viewpoint on the crest of the mountains, the Aegean stretched out northwards before us, as calm as a lake, to well beyond Milos, Santorini and the first Dodecanese Islands. Even Cape Matapan could be seen far off, beyond Kythera. And in that lovely island-speckled sea we saw tiny warships moving in slow curves, and firing what looked like rockets against wasp-like planes that turned and dived and produced bright explosions beneath them. Afterwards we heard we had seen the German Air Force harassing the Royal Navy after the latter had sunk a German invasion fleet of fifty-two caiques.

"The King, although he had not slept well, seemed rested and in better spirits. He decided to surrender his donkey to Mr. Varvaressos, whom the doctors had said suffered from heart trouble. We got ourselves in marching order again and sallied down the cedar-covered southern slopes of the White Mountains. The way down was magnificent, along a rapidly swelling, crystal-clear river that reminded me of Kashmir, as my cousin agreed. Soon we were joined by a Greek, who said he had come from Canae, and told us that the Germans had overrun the whole of the plain up to Suda, had bombed Canae beyond recognition and were now besieging Freyberg in his new Headquarters. He also said there were so many German corpses about the plain that the stench was unbearable. He then continued with us, often leading the way as though knowing the country well. He was probably an old smuggler.

"The countryside was so beautiful as to distract our

minds from our troubles. It would really be worth while going on that trip again. My father, Prince George, who was High Commissioner in Crete from 1898 to 1906, tells me he remembers once riding along the same way. The King, always a mine of interesting pieces of information, told me the old Byzantine Emperors used to obtain some of their supplies of cedar wood from these hills.

"We were now beginning to wonder what we would find on the coast. Would the Germans or Italians be waiting for us? Would we be captured there? Or would the prearranged plans for our rescue materialise? Had Freyberg informed Middle East that we were on our way to Aghia Roumeli? And what had happened to Freyberg? With such questions did we express our concern for the future.

"At about half-past eleven we arrived at the outskirts of the fort-like village of Samara, in a very wild spot, where the steep cliffs on either side completely shut out the sun except for a few hours a day. It is very rare that strangers venture here, as the inhabitants are known for an unfriendly lot, who keep very much to themselves. We found them all waiting in battle formation, with guns directed against us. Tsouderos called out to them that we were friends and gave our names. They asked for a man to go on ahead and speak to them. Bolanis's friend went, and after a short talk, the rifles came slowly down and we were allowed to proceed. We went to an hospitable house and were there given food, and also water with which to wash. Everyone used my razor, as I was the only one to have remembered this useful implement!

"Then suddenly a runner, in the typical Cretan trousers and high boots, dashed into the house and called out excitedly that he had a message for the British Colonel. We crowded round him, and found he had a paper addressed to Colonel Blunt. It was from General Heywood, now head of the British Military Mission, who had reached Sphakia, and had sent the man to try to find us. The message told us firstly that Freyberg had lost Maleme, and that he was sending troops to Sphakia, which was to become the place of embarkation, and secondly, that arrangements

were being made with Middle East for us to be taken off that night.

"This put an end to our speculations, and after a meal and a rest, we went on. The path led down through the deep canyon known as the gorge of Samara, and we travelled in its semi-gloom until it was nearly dark. Occasionally we spied, through the narrow slit in the rocky walls above, plane formations flying very high in a northerly direction. In the evening just before we reached Aghia Roumeli the gorge opened out into an oleander-planted valley, and here the King was greeted by Heywood and Admiral Turle, the Naval Attaché, and nearly the entire staff of the British Legation, not to mention the Greek gendarmes from Aghia Roumeli. We went on with them, and found Sir Michael Palaiet, the British Minister, and his wife, waiting in the garden of a small house in the tiny village, which consisted of only five or six buildings. The Minister looked tired and shaken. Lady Palaiet was already busy getting a dinner ready for us—a piece of thoughtfulness for which the King and all of us were very grateful.

"Turle told us he expected we would be picked up that night, and so, the meal finished, we set ourselves down to wait. The King and I made ourselves beds in the sand on the beach, and fell asleep. I was awakened at about midnight to find Turle, surrounded by the others, signalling with a torch out to sea. Answering flashes came from a long way out, but the Admiral went on flashing his torch, saying that he wasn't quite sure if it was a British ship. After some discussion as to our best course, it was agreed that Harold Caccia, the Legation's first secretary, should go out in the little motor-boat in which Heywood had come from Sphakia, and find out whether the ship was friend or enemy. As a diplomat, he wouldn't be taken prisoner, and would be repatriated. Caccia went out to sea, hugely amused at the idea of not coming back, and we waited anxiously for what seemed a long time, until at last he returned, calling out before reaching the beach: 'She's British!' We all gave three cheers.

"Then we said good-bye to Bolanis and his friend, and the other Greeks, and started to embark. The little boat

made several trips out and back, and by two o'clock we were on board H.M. Destroyer *Decoy*. The Minister and his wife and staff went to another destroyer that had come up alongside. In the *Decoy*, King George and I, and indeed the whole party, slept on the floor of the wardroom, as there was no other accommodation. In the morning we went to the bridge with the skipper, Commander MacGregor, and watched what was left of the Mediterranean Fleet (for they had lost fourteen ships) steam up to escort us. In the van were the *Valiant* and, I think, the *Queen Elizabeth*, and in the former of these two cruisers my cousin Philip was serving."

The party reached Alexandria at midnight on May 21st. A day or two later King George presented medals to the New Zealanders, and bade them good-bye. Together they had shared in an adventure that had been a test of morale for them all. Throughout the difficult trip over the rocky White Mountains, whether toiling over the barren slopes or clambering precariously across precipitous ravines, the King showed always calm patience and good spirit. "Though of all the party he had the most reason for sorrow, and the greatest burden of years, he won their unstinted admiration by his cheerfulness and endurance." *

At the end of the year, when the King arrived in England, he was decorated with the Distinguished Service Order in recognition of the courage he had shown when in contact with the enemy in Crete. He was the only reigning sovereign to earn this award, and it was the one that he prized most among all his numerous decorations.

* British War Office booklet, *The Campaign in Greece and Crete*, p. 61.

CHAPTER VIII

WILDERNESS

IN June, after a short stay in Egypt, King George and all the other members of the family, except Prince Peter, sailed from Port Said for South Africa, where the Crown Prince and Princess had already set about trying to establish a home. For a few hours during the journey from Suez to Durban, the King and his companions forgot their troubles in the riotous ritual of "crossing the line", as organised by Admiral Turle. In the photograph opposite page 81 King George can be seen drinking his "cocktail" prior to being ducked, with, on the left, Prince George as Neptune and Princess Alexandra as his Queen. Beyond the pool is Princess George, with her cine-camera in action.

King George was the first reigning sovereign to land in South Africa, and this fact, together with the part he had played in the recent campaigns, earned him a great reception. After a short visit to Pretoria, he joined the rest of the Royal Family at Capetown.

In September the King, accompanied by the Crown Prince, Colonel Levidis and others of his immediate entourage, as well as Prime Minister Tsouderos and members of his Government, went on to England, where again he was given the reception due to the steadfast ruler of a gallant, although defeated Ally. He was met at Victoria Station by Their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, the Duke and Duchess of Kent, and various British and Greek notabilities.

King George's arrival was acclaimed with enthusiasm by the Press. "King George remains the outstanding leader of his country in its time of peril," pronounced *The Times*.* "The most heroic figure of them all is the King

* September 23rd.

of the Hellenes," agreed the *Star*; * "How much Greece herself owes to the devoted leadership of her King," exclaimed the *Telegraph*; † and the *Daily Herald* a few weeks later informed its readers that "... although again without a country and a throne, he possessed the admiration and loyalty of all Greeks everywhere". ‡ Provincial papers joined in the chorus: "... a King worthy of everything good in the tradition of monarchy"; § "King George of the Hellenes has amply proved he is a brave man as well as an understanding monarch whose supreme aim is to preserve the liberties of his people"; || "Never was a Royal visitor more welcome, never did one more worthy of honour land upon our shores"; ¶ "the whole Greek Nation is rallying around the King as a symbol of victory and national resurrection." **

This typical selection of the praises showered upon King George and his people was reflected in the warm regard of the British public, and in sentiments repeatedly expressed at many official functions held in his honour, such as the Mansion House luncheon, and the conferring of an honorary degree by Cambridge University. Moving political speeches about the King's magnificent record included a declaration that he should one day return to his country at the head of his troops. And to regularise the position of the exile Government, Mr. Winston Churchill, in a letter to the Greek Prime Minister on October 27th, wrote: "... I wish, at the same time, to take this opportunity once more to re-affirm to your Excellency that your Government, now declared to be a democratic Government under a beloved Constitutional Monarchy, enjoys the full confidence and support of His Majesty's Government and the British people."

In June, 1942, King George paid a visit to the United States. The trip was undertaken at the suggestion of

* October 2nd.

† September 23rd.

‡ October 6th.

§ *Yorkshire Post*, September 23rd.

|| *Lancashire Daily Post*, September 23rd.

¶ *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, September 23rd.

** *Glasgow Herald*, and also *The Times*, September 26th.

Britain, in order to help intensify the American war effort—an object in which the King was completely successful. In the American Press the panegyrics that had been showered on the King in London were repeated. “To-day Washington proudly welcomes him—as a King in deed as well as title,” declared the *Washington Evening Star*; * “this King is a man that our democracy will delight to honour for himself and his country, as well as for his exalted rank,” confirmed the *Washington Post*; † “few monarchs of our day have been more worthy of the trust reposed in them,” declared the *New York Herald Tribune*; ‡ “King George of the Hellenes now shares with the late King Albert of the Belgians the distinction of being the only reigning monarch ever to have addressed a joint session of the United States Senate and House of Representatives. . . . The King’s visit led to the offer of a Lease-Lend master agreement similar to that signed with Britain.” §

These Press extracts are quoted to show how, at this period, King George’s name was held so high in both Britain and the United States that it seemed as though nothing could ever assail it. But forces were already at work to do so. At the zenith of his repute, King George could not realise that disruptive influences would want to tear him down from the place he had gained for himself and for Greece. Nor could he ever for a moment expect to find such influences among his own people, his own Ministers and officers, or among the ranks of the British Ally, in loyalty to which he had led Greece into such immense sacrifice.

He returned to England to place himself at the head of the exile Government now trying to re-organise the national forces. He stayed in London because it was the centre of anti-Axis resistance, where the exiled Governments of an overrun Europe had assembled. He wished also to be near to Mr. Churchill, the mainspring of the Allied will to continue fighting until the hour struck for

* June 10th.

† June 10th.

‡ June 18th.

§ From an article by the Washington Correspondent of the London *Daily Telegraph*, June 16th.

victory. He learned that resistance groups had emerged in the mountains of Greece, but was not kept fully informed of the way in which these forces were being employed by the British Command. At first completely unsuspecting, it was some time before he could give credence to the reports that reached him, including those from Crown Prince Paul and Prince Peter, on the influences that were at work in the Middle East to try to undermine the position of the monarchy.

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Throughout the period 1941 to 1946 the Crown Prince Paul was on the move between London, Cairo and Cape-town. Everywhere keeping his ear to the ground, he maintained touch with his cousin, Prince Peter, in Egypt, and conveyed to his brother information and views of a kind not suitable for inclusion in even secret correspondence. He spent some time with his family in South Africa, where the Crown Princess was expecting her third baby. At times he envied his cousin Peter, free of the sobering responsibilities that fall upon the heir to the throne, and so able to take a more active part in the events of the war in the Middle East. In general, he passed his time in the usual run of unsatisfying duties that are the fate of all those who are first in the line of succession to a throne, and, in fact, of nearly all deputies to important appointments. Eventually impatient for action, his later efforts to return to Greece to take part in the resistance were firmly discouraged, as will be described in a subsequent chapter.

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After Crete, Prince Peter stayed on in the Middle East with Cairo as his base, until May, 1947—a total period of six years. From the day of departure of King George and Prime Minister Tsouderos for South Africa on June 15th, 1941, until March, 1943, when King George returned, Prince Peter's duties consisted of acting as the King's personal representative in the Middle East in addition to continuing his original work as Liaison Officer between the Greek Army and British and Allied Headquarters. He was awarded the Greek War Cross for his services in Greece,

and promoted Major. "I still hold the same rank to-day," commented Prince Peter wryly, in 1947.

Although based in Egypt, Prince Peter managed to spend several periods away from its sultry climate. He did not visit South Africa, although invited to do so by several members of the family, but twice made the trip to London and back by air by order of the King. On the first occasion he was invested with the C.B. by King George VI. He also visited the Lebanon, Syria and Iran, and later Teheran, where he stayed with the Shah. After 1943, when political influences caused him to be relieved of his liaison appointment, he carried out two attachments, one with the 5th New Zealand Brigade at Cassino, and the other with Generalissimo Tchang Kai Tchek in Chungking, where he passed the summer of 1945, including V.E. Day. In the summer of 1946, while awaiting the plebiscite in Greece, he obtained three months' leave to visit Afghanistan, after which he remained in Cairo until the last remnants of the Greek establishments closed down in April, 1947.

While on the New Zealand attachment, when he renewed his acquaintance with General Freyberg, Prince Peter was able to witness the first failure of the Cassino attack. During the American bombing of the monastery held by the Germans, Freyberg withdrew his troops from their forward positions below the hill, in order that they should not suffer from inaccurate bombing. When the Indian Division moved forward to attack the still-smoking remains of the Abbey they found that the Germans had occupied our initial positions while the bombing was taking place! Freyberg took two days to regain this line, and by the time he was ready to launch his attack against the monastery the enemy had dug himself firmly into the ruins. The only other incidents "that have left some mark on my mind were first, seeing a house in which we had conferred with Company Commanders blown up two minutes after we had left it, and secondly, the wooden mines with which Trochio was strewn. One of these eventually blew off both the legs of General Kippenberger commanding the 5th Brigade, after I had repeatedly warned him not to walk over a particularly dangerous grass plot."

Early in his service in the Middle East, Prince Peter was offered command of the Intelligence and Political Information Service with Occupied Greece. This offer came from the Greek Prime Minister, but feeling that it would be unwise for a member of the Royal Family to be connected with such tricky work, Prince Peter refused. He was afterwards thankful that he did so, for the Service proved the undoing of many of its chief operators.

In his role as Liaison Officer in the Middle East, Prince Peter was well aware of the E.A.M. activities among Greek troops. His own political outlook is democratic, and dates perhaps from his early military training in Denmark, to which country the Royal Family's nationality reverted, because of its Danish origin, when republican Greece deprived its members of Greek nationality in 1923. Prince Peter had, indeed, sometimes invited criticism by expressions of opinion that were in conflict with the official attitude of the monarchy. But democracy was one thing, and subversion of the military forces of the legal Government was another. He did not fail to warn King George, and everybody else with whom his duties brought him in contact, that trouble would follow. His downright attitude was not approved by schemers in the Greek Government, nor by certain elements of the British Military Headquarters, and, as was to be expected, he was decidedly unpopular among the subversive elements and their representatives. The result was that when, after the Greek mutiny in Syria, a new War Minister was appointed as a nominee of the mutineers, his first action was to fulfil his promise to his supporters to get rid of Prince Peter. Then serving in Tripoli with the Greek Sacred Squadron, Prince Peter returned in haste to Cairo, to be met with his dismissal. As King George had by now arrived from England, Prince Peter reverted to his old appointment as A.D.C., and as such was re-integrated into the Royal Military Household.

Throughout most of his time in the Middle East, and also in many of his trips out of that area, Prince Peter enjoyed the company of his wife, who had been in Istanbul when the Greek-Italian war broke out, and who had made her way to Palestine to meet her husband after his escape

from Crete. A Russian by birth, Mademoiselle Irene Ortchinnikov lost her father in the revolution, and fled with her mother to Paris, where years later she met Prince Peter while he was studying at the University. Their acquaintance ripened on the basis of mutual interest in such unlikely subjects as comparative religion and anthropology, and she accompanied him on some of his field work in the Far East. They were married in India a few weeks after the outbreak of war. As this wedding was performed in a registry office, they took the opportunity whilst in Palestine to be united in the Church ceremony, and were married by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch. Prince Peter hoped that all that now remained to regularise the union in Greek law was for the King to give his approval, but this King George could not see his way to do, as neither his consent nor that of the head of the Greek Church had been obtained before the first marriage. Such are the burdens and responsibilities of regal birth!

During their trip to Teheran, Prince and Princess Peter visited the Greek communities in Russian-occupied territory on the southern coast of the Caspian. They were given a good reception by the Russian authorities, and two battalions of troops fresh from Stalingrad paraded for them. This visit raised many speculations in the Middle East as to why Prince Peter was apparently interested in the Russians, who, as everybody suspected, were in remote control of the Communist troubles in Greece. These speculations deepened when the Princess, whose contact with Russians had stimulated patriotic feelings for the country of her birth, organised a fund for purchasing cigarettes for the Soviet Army, and also when it was seen that the Prince and Princess were socially on good terms with Russian diplomatic staffs in Cairo and elsewhere. Later, however, when more normal conditions returned to Greece, these actions assumed perspective and lost the special significance that had been placed on them by the highly inquisitive.

For Prince Peter's activities in the Persian-Afghanistan area were, to a great extent, an expression of his life's interest, shown since student days in Paris and London, in

the various ramifications of anthropology. In field work he has directed much of his attention to archaeology, especially research into the Hellenistic period in the Orient, for the advancement of which he formed an International Institute in Alexandria. In addition to Afghanistan, where he saw Hellenistic remains uncovered by the French Archaeological Mission, and the other countries previously mentioned, he has made fruitful expeditions to Tibet and China. His explorations, on which he has written and lectured widely in Britain and the U.S.A., have brought him fellowships of the Royal Central Asian Society, the Royal Anthropological Institute, and other scientific institutions. After the war, when he became free of military service, he took up this work again.

While the King, the Crown Prince and Prince Peter were dividing their time and interests mainly between London and Cairo, other members of the family were living in difficulty, and sometimes suffering, under the world upheavals that followed the widening waves of Nazi conquest. Some of the family were in enemy and occupied territory, others with the Allies. The largest group of these enjoyed the security and hospitality of South Africa. Here the Crown Princess, joined by several others of the Royal Family, tried to settle down to the prosaic business of living in exile, while at the same time taking a part in the activities of war. After an initial spell of general popularity, following on the dramatic months of the struggle in Greece and Crete, the members of the family began to suffer to some extent through the hostile attitude eventually adopted towards them by the Greek Government in Cairo, supported by a large proportion of the world's Press.

But in South Africa the *impasse* did not last for long, mainly because of the impression made by the spirit and charm of the Crown Princess. In Capetown, Pretoria, Johannesburg—indeed, throughout the Union—in Government circles and in private society, her sincerity, allied to her vivacity and wit, made her not only one of the best-known figures in the South African scene, but also a strong argument in favour of the Greek monarchy.



H M The Queen Mother Helen of Roumania.



King Michael chats with the Author at a reception in Bucharest

King Michael between the Russian Marshal Tolboukin and the Roumanian Communist Premier, Dr. Groza



Her popularity was due not only to the attractions of her personal qualities, but also to her persuasive activities for Greek welfare. In her achievement she was strongly supported by the work of Princess Katherine, who for six months nursed in the Wynberg Military Hospital at Capetown, and for the next two-and-a-half years was engaged in voluntary war work, mainly at the Tombani House on the outskirts of Capetown, run by St. Dunstan's as a training centre for blinded casualties, British and South African, mostly from the Western Desert. Here she and Princess Eugénie—Prince Peter's sister—better known to the men as Sisters Katherine and Eugénie, shared in the care of the "Tombani Boys", accompanying them on picnics or entertaining them in their homes. The welfare work of Princess Eugénie, wife of the Polish Prince Dominique-Renier Radziwill, was interrupted for a time by the birth of her second child Prince George-Andrew, in Capetown, and later affected by domestic differences that led eventually to divorce.

Princess Frederica, although she had two children to look after and was expecting a third, took her share of voluntary services, such as the canteen work pictured opposite page 85. Her main work in South Africa, however, was the organisation of her Fund for Greek Relief. So far from the fund being sponsored by the anti-monarchist Greek Government in Cairo, her efforts were officially resisted. In face of the opposition of Greek legations everywhere, acting under the instructions of these hostile elements, the Crown Princess was momentarily baffled. She just failed to understand how Greeks, whatever their political ideas, could wish to deny their own people the chance of relief and assistance that a fund offered. "I was still rather a girl when I left Greece," she told me, "and thought that nearly everybody in the world was swayed by good motives, whatever their political ideas. All I wanted to do was to help Greece." Disappointed, but undeterred by opposition, she reacted spiritedly by organising the fund entirely as a personal one, under the name "Crown Princess Frederica's Fund". She travelled energetically around Africa, seldom receiving open aid from Greek officials, but

enlisting the help of the Greek communities, and gaining the support of the wives of high British officials in the Union, the Rhodesias, Uganda and Tanganyika.

She went from town to town, by car, rail and air, organising local committees and persuading the women to serve on them. By air alone she covered over 50,000 miles. Many of her air journeys were made in one of Field-Marshal Smuts' official aeroplanes, an indication of the sympathy which her efforts inspired not only with him and Mrs. Smuts, but with most other South Africans. Her energy and persistence were rewarded, for her fund reached nearly £100,000 in South Africa, all privately donated, and another £100,000 in Egypt. Here the fund included a £5,000 donation from the Egyptian Government, a gift which the Crown Princess was told was without precedent, for the Government had never before officially responded to a privately sponsored relief appeal. When Greece was liberated, the mobile clinics, blankets and other equipment bought by her fund proved immediately useful, supplementing the generous aid of U.N.N.R.A. to meet needs which the Princess knew to be urgent. The clinics were sent to remote country districts, where they did, and are still doing, vitally useful work.

Organising her fund was only one of Princess Frederica's preoccupations. Another main worry, especially during the beginning of her two-and-a-half years in South Africa, was finding somewhere to live. For a time the family stayed at Westbrooke, the residence of Sir Patrick Duncan, Governor-General of South Africa, but their enjoyment of this hospitality was suddenly cut short. One night fire broke out and completely gutted a wing of the house. Most of the Royal party, which included Prince and Princess George and Princess Eugénie, had to escape in their night clothes, losing everything they possessed except a few personal valuables.

Princess Frederica told me how, having made sure that the children were safe, she went back into the burning wing to try to save more of her personal possessions. She reached her room, where, to the accompaniment of the roar of flames in the passage outside, she hastily threw her

treasures on to a blanket. But just as she was about to lift up the bundle, a cloud of smoke rolled into the room, and swirled around her. Her head started to swim, and she realised she was choking. Holding her breath, she abandoned her bundle, and already feeling as though about to faint, had just enough strength to stumble to the door and get clear.

Princess Katherine had been out that evening to a cinema, and arrived back to find the lawn covered with furniture and effects that helpers had carried from the buildings. In the flame-lit obscurity she sought and found all the members of the family except the Crown Princess. With growing anxiety she continued her questioning until, realising that her sister-in-law was still in danger, she ran to the burning wing and stood outside the bedroom window, crying loudly in mixed panic and indignation: "Freddie, come out at once! You know your father wouldn't allow you to do this." Why she should have thought of Princess Frederica's father at such a moment is a problem that Princess Katherine has never been able to answer.

After this adventure the family enjoyed for three months the hospitality of Field-Marshal Smuts, who lent his official residence, the Cecil Rhodes House, Grootshuur, in the same grounds as Government House at Rondebush, near Capetown. Still unable to find a home of her own, because the capital was then flooded with refugees, Princess Frederica moved to a small hotel outside the city. Prince Paul was then away in Egypt. The month that she and Princess Katherine endured here included their first and not very enjoyable Christmas in South Africa. They were not happy in the hotel, chiefly because the rats kept them awake at night. "I usually went to bed with a stick in one hand and a torch in the other," she declared. Rats were not the only trouble, as she and Princess Katherine were sometimes frightened by sounds around the house after dark. On one occasion they found the noises came from a stray donkey which had stuck halfway through an open window.

After leaving the hotel, Princess Frederica found a large

pleasant house called Clairmont, in the countryside near Capetown, and here Princess Irene was born. Prince Paul came back from Egypt to be with his wife during this period. Field-Marshal Smuts stood as godfather, and in the photograph opposite page 85 is shown taking part in the christening ceremony.

Three weeks after the birth of Princess Irene, Prince Paul was called back to Egypt. The Crown Princess insisted on accompanying him, in spite of everybody's advice that she should take things quietly. They flew to Egypt, accompanied by the Crown Prince's equerry, Wing-Commander Potamianos, but at Khartoum they learned that she could not be permitted to go farther, as Rommel was threatening Egypt and most British women were being evacuated. Prince Paul and his equerry flew on, and she was left alone, with one suitcase. She waited miserably for several days, until she was allowed to go on to Cairo in an R.A.F. transport plane.

As will be described later, the Crown Princess has an ineradicable dread of flying, and had always previously flown in the company of her husband or somebody close to her. She hated every minute of her trip to Cairo, but endured it gamely because she was rejoining Prince Paul. After a week, however, the Headquarters evacuation specialists got their way, and she was sent back to South Africa, once more travelling alone. This time the trip was an unrelieved misery for her, and for hours during the first part of her journey she could do nothing but sit quietly weeping. Her fellow-passengers, mostly officers, were embarrassed, but quite incapable of doing anything, except one young British officer, in the seat in front of her. Without turning his head or saying a word, he passed back a bunch of magazines, with a gesture which seemed to say, as the Crown Princess felt, "For heaven's sake, woman, read these and stop that crying!" Eventually exhausted, she fell asleep, only to be awakened by sharp bankings of the plane. She heard a voice speaking of an Italian aeroplane, and immediately assumed that her plane was being attacked. For some moments she sat petrified with fright, anticipating the worst, waiting for the sound of firing, the



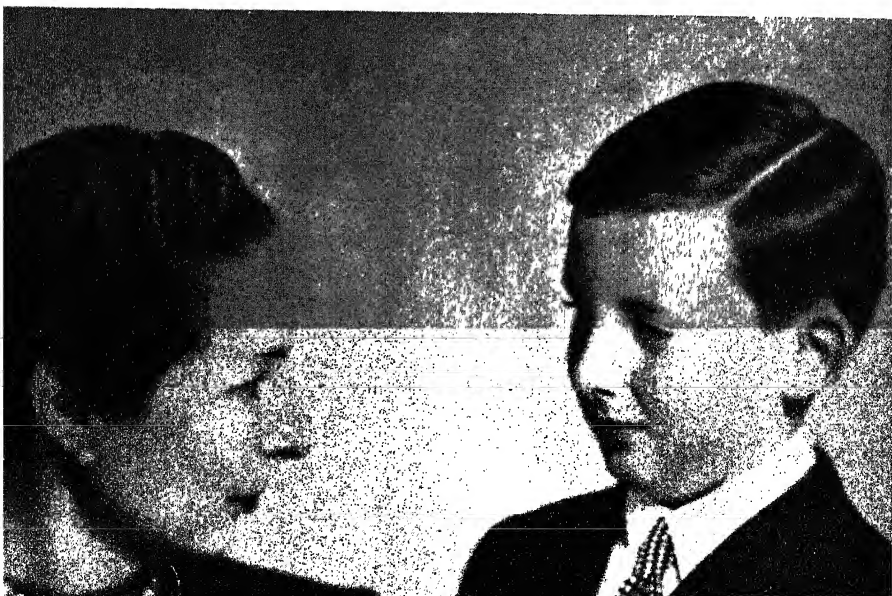


Princess Paul of Yugoslavia.



Princess Elizabeth, Countess Toerring-Yettenbach.

Françoise, Princess Christopher of Greece and her son Prince Michael.



outbreak of flames, the resulting crash to earth. The plane descended and circled several times at a low altitude. Then the Princess learned, to her relief, that they had come down to inspect the remains of an Italian plane that one of the R.A.F. passengers had destroyed during the Eritrean campaign.

After a long and, from her point of view, nerve-racking journey, she rejoined her family in Capetown. To absorb her energies she took to rock-climbing, and acquired the necessary dexterity and fitness very quickly, as she showed by the hazardous performance of rope-climbing the Table Mountain. When the news of this feat became public, the Government declined further responsibility for her safety, and telegraphed to Egypt for Prince Paul to come back and look after her.

To Princess Frederica the disadvantages of exile were new, but to the others of the family in "the wilderness" the experience, although not so bitter as the previous long exile, was only too familiar, even though this time it was the enemy and not the Greek people who had thrust them out. Nevertheless they were still lodgers on the world's goodwill, without their own homes, always living in their baggage, ready to move.

CHAPTER IX

“ . . ARROWS OF OUTRAGEOUS FORTUNE ”

Nor all those of the Royal House who sought refuge in Africa met at first with friendly hospitality. One member of the family who did not share in the general welcome was Princess Olga, the beautiful eldest daughter of Prince Nicholas and Princess Helen. She had accompanied her husband, Prince Paul of Yugoslavia, into banishment after the dramatic events that followed his ill-starred, and to the English world that he knew and loved, inexplicable, action in countenancing a pact with Germany.

It is easy to criticise a man faced with great responsibilities when he makes the wrong decision. It is not so easy to try to discover why a man whose affection for England was old and sincere, who was once an Oxford undergraduate, whose son attended an English preparatory school, and whose wife's sister was married to the brother of King George of Britain, should force himself to cut across these ties in order to compromise with the Nazi bully. Only the strongest pressure could have compelled him to so repugnant an action. As is now realised, the reasons were many, but they can be reduced to two that contained them all. The first was that Prince Paul failed to understand the true spirit of the people of Yugoslavia. The second was that the country was not like Greece, united and disciplined under leaders who were sure of themselves. “The Yugoslav people have cause to regret that in the hour of their trial they did not find at their head a leader so bold as General Metaxas, a ruler so resolute as King George.” *

Prince Paul was not greatly enamoured of the role of Regent that he had undertaken for the sake of his young first cousin, King Peter II. He had few qualifications for

* *The Times*, March 25th, 1941.

such a responsibility, other than his birth. Artistic, a sensitive idealist, he had neither the temperament nor the character for strong leadership, and so he relied on advisers who were divided in their loyalties, or who saw only the inevitability of conquest. The country was not homogeneous like Greece, for Croatia was ready for defection, a weakness that prejudiced the plans for defence and also the morale of the armed forces. German armies stood ready on all the borders—Austria, Hungary, Roumania, Bulgaria. No aid could come from Britain or France. Communism was an underground force that could not be ignored. To Prince Paul and the Government the alternative to German domination, whether Yugoslavia fought or not, was Soviet domination. Prince Paul was no friend of Soviet Russia, for all the private estates of his mother, the Russian Princess Demidof, had been confiscated after the Revolution.

His advisers said, " Better Germany than Russia, better Nazism than Communism ". Prince Paul, after long and troubled searchings in his own mind to find the answer, at last, against his innate sentiments, agreed—and so opened the door to disaster for his country and himself.

For he not only forfeited the links of his attachments to Britain, but produced a reaction in Belgrade that forced him to flee the country. Yet the revolt headed by General Simovich was only a spirited gesture of resolution not to submit. His hastily formed Government, with the youthful King Peter at its head, could not readjust the country's defences in the short time that elapsed before the German attack arrived. Yugoslavia collapsed after only twelve days resistance. Greece, too, collapsed quickly under the German attack, but for different reasons, for she was already exhausted by the fight with Italy, and the British aid was inadequate. Yugoslavia was not weak—most of her five hundred aircraft, for example, took little effective part in the fighting. Yugoslavia fell easily because, although she had the spirit to resist, she lacked the unity, discipline and readiness for war that Greece showed in November, 1940.

Fugitive from their own people, Prince Paul and Princess Olga made their way to Africa, seeking refuge, but finding ostracism. In Kenya Prince Paul was blackballed by a

social club. In South Africa he met general hostility and suspicion. Soon he retired into seclusion in a house in a Johannesburg suburb, where he had ample time to ponder on the uncertainties of princely leadership, and no doubt to concur in the dictum of his father-in-law that "to be born a prince is an accident, but not always a privilege".

During these tribulations Princess Olga stood resolutely by his side, although unexpected banishment had fallen on her perhaps even more distressingly than on her husband. Cheerful, practical and in full appreciation of her responsibilities as the first lady of Yugoslavia, she had been suddenly warned by the revolting leaders that she must leave the country in a few hours. The frantic packing, the confusion of the hurried flight to Greece and Egypt, the sense of public obloquy, the search for a home, all came one after the other in a succession of blows that might have overcome a less resilient personality. But Princess Olga, always something of a philosopher, faced her troubles bravely. Most of all, perhaps, she missed her dignified, well-appointed house—the White Palace in the Dedinje hills just outside Belgrade. Early in 1945, I visited the Palace as the guest of Marshal Tito, and could not refrain from admiring its well-proportioned rooms, furnished simply but with cultured taste. I could well appreciate Princess Olga's emotions at the thought of her cherished home in the possession of the Communists, while she had to live in enforced isolation in a fashionable villa in mid-Africa. No wonder that at times even her philosophical outlook could not entirely reconcile her to such a change of background.

But Princess Olga's afflictions were soon to be swept away by a greater sorrow that came to one near and dear to her since childhood—her sister Marina. For after the tragic flying accident in which the Duke of Kent was killed, the Duchess, overcome by her grief, and with none of her own kin near her, sought and obtained permission for her sister to join her. Princess Olga came to England, and her companionship helped to draw the Duchess out of her despair.

Until that ill-fated flight in 1942, the story of Marina, Princess of Greece, was one in which the family theme of misfortune overtaking serenity seemed to have been sufficiently fulfilled by the adversities of exile into which her parents were forced by the fall of King Constantine. For although her youth and early womanhood had been shadowed by the embarrassments of being in effect countryless, homeless and without fortune, yet real tragedy had never touched her. When romance came to her, a world that watched in the fascination of seeing a fairy-tale come true declared that this must surely be the one fable in which they live happily ever after.

For the first time the ceremony of a Royal wedding was broadcast. Few of those who heard Princess Marina utter the words “I will”, and soon afterwards saw her drive radiantly with her husband through the crowded London streets, will ever forget the thrill that seized the capital over the freshness and glamour of this union.

For to most British people Princess Marina was unknown, because during the long period of King George's exile, whenever a branch of the family visited London, it did so incognito. They paid their respects privately to our King and Queen, carefully avoided publicity, and kept closely within their own circle of friends. All this was done as a matter of courtesy, in order not to embarrass our own Royal Family, or our Government in its relations with the Greek Republican Government. The result was that Britain knew comparatively little of most of the Greek Royal Family. So far as Princess Marina was concerned, however, this deficiency was soon made good. The public learned that their new Duchess was one of the three daughters of Prince and Princess Nicholas of Greece, that she was born in 1906, that Queen Mary was one of her godmothers, and that she had inherited the rare beauty that had made her mother renowned in the Imperial Russian Court. She shared also much of the artistic talent of her father.

Prince and Princess Nicholas had travelled a long and wearisome journey between their magnificent wedding in the Tsarkoe Selo and the unsettled life of refugees in France.

The early days of the family were spent in the Palace in Athens that the Tsar had given to the young couple as a wedding present. Here the children were brought up in the English way, joining with their cousins, the children of Prince and Princess Andrew, in their parties, their play, their riding exercise, and similar occupations of childhood. Marina, whose name is that of the Greek Saint, started lessons at the age of seven under an English governess, but her education was to be subjected in the coming years to many interruptions. The unhappy events of the struggle between King Constantine and Venizelos occurred at a very impressionable age in her girlhood. She can still remember having to take refuge in the cellars of her home during the Allied shelling of Athens and during the frequent street-fighting of those days. When the family left Greece in July, 1917, for exile in Switzerland, she was eleven, and, as already recounted, soon after they arrived and resumed their education, the three girls lost their English and French governesses under the policy of petty persecution followed by the Entente Powers.

Eventually settled in Paris, the scantiness of his income impelled the Prince to give lessons in painting, as well as to exploit his latent talent. This he did to such good effect that he soon established a reputation for himself under the signature "Nicholas le Prince". The three girls grew up against the informal background of his studio, and it was here that Prince Nicholas helped and encouraged his daughter Marina to develop her own artistic gifts.

When Princess Olga grew up she became engaged to the Crown Prince Frederick of Denmark. But she was very young and was not sure of her heart. Differences arose and the engagement was broken off. Soon afterwards she met Prince Paul of Yugoslavia. The two fell in love, and the whole family journeyed to Belgrade for the wedding in the autumn of 1923. They stayed at Prince Paul's chalet at Bohinj, near Lake Bled, in the Julian Alps, where both Marina and her sister Elizabeth were later to find their own romances, and where in after years the amenities were to be enjoyed by the more prosaic figure of Marshal Tito.

In early womanhood Marina and her sisters had kept up

close ties with their four cousins, the daughters of Prince Andrew. But these all married, and soon her sister Elizabeth followed suit by wedding Count Toerring-Yettenbach, whom she met while staying at Prince Paul's chalet. Now left alone, Marina travelled around Europe, staying with relations and friends in England, France, Italy and Germany, and spending much of her time in Paris, where for a while she gave her interest to fashion modelling. On one of her visits to England she met Prince George, and the two enjoyed each other's company in informal social activities in and around London, although nothing further then seemed likely to develop.

Some time afterwards, in the summer of 1934, while on a visit to her sister Elizabeth in Munich, she was invited by Prince Paul to stay at Bohinj. A few days later, at match-maker Paul's invitation, Prince George arrived by air from England. He and Princess Marina were immediately drawn together, and against the idyllic background of this enchanting mountain home, sentiment developed quickly. After five days in the company of his attractive companion, Prince George proposed.

The British world was greatly excited by the Royal romance. Princess Marina's journey to England was a succession of triumphal receptions by large British colonies in every big city. The British public enthusiastically greeted this beautiful unknown Princess that the King's son, now to become the Duke of Kent, had brought to them. London went crazy about her. She became the acknowledged leader of fashion. Her favourite colours became the nation's choice. Certainly her long period of exile ended on that day in November, when the radio enabled the whole nation to join in the ceremony of her wedding, and to welcome her as one of their own.

Happily married, the Royal couple lived in a fine house, Coppins, at Iver in Buckinghamshire. Except for the death of her father, Prince Nicholas, in 1938, little occurred to mar Marina's full measure of contentment. Two children were born, first Prince Edward and then Princess Alexandra. The war came, postponing the Duke's appointment as Governor-General of Australia, for which

he had been designated. Instead he took up a succession of war duties, as did also the Duchess in V.A.D. work and also in her role as Commandant of the Women's Royal Naval Service.

In August, 1942, the Duke volunteered to visit our troops in Iceland. The aeroplane in which he travelled crashed into the Eagle Rock at Caithness, with the loss of all on board, except an air gunner. The accident occurred a few weeks after the birth of the third baby, Prince Michael, to whom President Roosevelt had acted as godfather. The Duchess, stricken by the shock of her loss, her world collapsing around her, retired at once into a deep seclusion, which persisted until at last her health was threatened by the state of inconsolable grief into which she had fallen. It was then that Princess Olga, leaving her troubles behind her in South Africa, came to England to help her sister face a normal existence once more.

Since the war the Duchess of Kent has gradually re-entered public life, but her main interest lies in her children and her home. Her widowhood draws to her the country's affection, for there is none who does not feel sympathy for her in the lonely path ordained by her exalted station.

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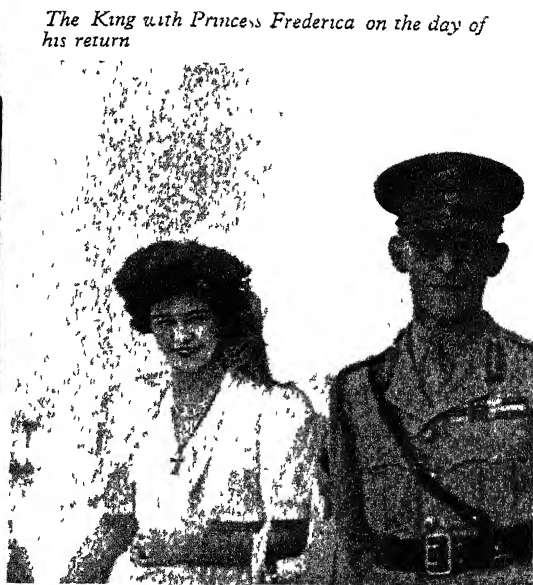
Princess Olga lost her home and position because her husband mistakenly submitted to the threat of Nazi force. Her sister, Princess Marina, lost her husband and her happiness in one of the harsh blows that Fate deals indiscriminately in war. And another Greek Princess, the Cinderella of the family, Alexandra, daughter of themorganatic marriage of King Alexander, was to be wounded with yet another "arrow of outrageous fortune", for she was to marry a King and eagerly expect to share his throne, only to see it stolen from them less than two years later. Thus was she to join the select circle in her family of those who have held and lost a throne—her grandfather, King Constantine; her uncle, King George II; her aunt, the Princess Helen, who was never crowned Queen of Roumania because of her broken marriage, and even her other aunt, Princess Irene, for a time Queen in name only of the



King George II returns to Greece—September, 1946



Prince Constantine and his sisters travel by sea from Egypt to Athens



The King with Princess Frederica on the day of his return



King George, with Crown Prince Paul on board the Averoff at Salamis in December, 1946

King Paul swears the Oath of Allegiance to the Constitution, April, 1947.



German-created state of Croatia; and finally, her cousin, King Michael of Roumania.

The Simovich *coup d'état* on March 27th, 1941, that drove Prince Paul from Yugoslavia, simultaneously called the boy King Peter II to assume active headship of the State. Son of King Alexander Karageorgevich, assassinated in 1934 by members of a Croat terrorist organisation, and of Queen Marie, sister of King Carol of Roumania, Peter was, like his cousin Michael, one quarter British and a descendant of Queen Victoria. Shy, inexperienced and amenable to the influence of those nearest to him, his abrupt assumption of high responsibility was quickly followed by a phase of personal danger. On April 14th, three days before Yugoslav forces capitulated to the Germans, King Peter and members of his Government escaped in a British flying-boat to Athens. I saw him during the four days he spent there before going on to Palestine, looking youthful and subdued by all the exciting events of the past few days. Then he flew to Jerusalem, where he remained with his Government for two months. In July they transferred their headquarters to London.

During the next two years the young King was concerned with the formation of successive governments in London, and with the march of events in Yugoslavia. With admiration he watched the beginnings of the resistance movement under Colonel Draza Mihailovich. Rumours, too, came of the resistance activities of a certain Josip Broz, now called Tito, a well-known Communist leader of Croatian descent. Because Mihailovich was a regular officer, leading men who were proud to call themselves Chetniks—the name of the old guerilla fighters against the Turks—King Peter's Government appointed him, in June, 1942, to be both Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief. But the emergence of the Tito Partisans caused complications, especially as some of Mihailovich's supporters were alleged to have arrived at an understanding with the Italian enemy, whereas the Partisans were suffering under a series of determined attacks at the hands of the Germans.

For some time conflicting reports reached England about

the two groups of Partisans, but one fact soon became clear. The Tito Group enjoyed the support of a "Free Yugoslavia" radio operating from Russian territory, and the attitude of Tito, as expressed in the broadcasts, was decidedly against the monarchy. For many months a flow of abuse, in what is now recognised as the usual Communist technique, was directed against the King and the legal Government, but no suspicions about the ultimate intention behind these attacks seemed to have been aroused in high British circles.

Meanwhile, for King Peter other complications had arisen, for he had met Princess Alexandra of Greece, who, with her mother, had accompanied King George to England in September, 1941. In London they discovered many friends among other war-time exiles, among them the young King. He fell ardently in love with her, and found his affection reciprocated. Princess Aspasia, not unmindful perhaps of certain slights to which she and her daughter had once been subjected, gave her full approval to the match, and sympathised with the young couple's desire for an early ceremony. But King Peter's Ministers thought differently. For the King to marry in time of war, and especially when his country was in such adversity, was not to be considered. The King was young, they argued, and had plenty of time ahead of him. And if he persisted, well, certain of his Ministers would have no alternative but to resign.

Impressed, King Peter postponed the happy event, and for a time contented himself with the felicity of formal engagement. He joined the Royal Air Force, went to Egypt and learned to fly, gaining his pilot's wings, which were formally presented to him by the Middle East Air Commander-in-Chief, Sir Sholto Douglas. On his return he reopened the question of his marriage to Princess Alexandra. In the tension of war, with a background of London bombings, of troubled Yugoslavia and an uncertain future, their patience would not wait upon the Ministers' demands for further delays. King Peter announced that he intended to marry. Certain of his Ministers duly resigned, and he appointed a new and more sympathetic

Government, composed partly of civil servants. On March 20th, 1944, on her marriage at the Yugoslav Embassy in London, Princess Alexandra became the Queen of Yugoslavia. Among a distinguished assembly of guests were two Kings of the same name, one, George II of Greece, and the other George VI of Britain, who acted as *Koum*, the Serbian equivalent of the Greek *Kumbaros*—in this case with the significance of best man. Queen Elizabeth also attended the wedding.

The King's marriage was criticised by the "Free Yugoslavia" propagandists, as was every possible angle of vulnerability that the subject of the monarchy presented. One of their accusations was that King Peter was no true Karageorgevich, for he had fled the country and abandoned his people, whereas Tito had remained with them. It was sometimes asked, even by those who were not antagonistic to the monarchy, why the young King, especially after he had gained his R.A.F. wings, did not return to Yugoslavia and place himself at the head of a combined resistance movement. At one time the proposition seemed reasonable enough, for Tito's ambitions were still masked under a mantle of patriotism. It was not generally known that King Peter did suggest that he be parachuted into Yugoslavia, but for political reasons, authority frowned on the proposal. There is little doubt that the decision was a right one. From the manner in which the Yugoslav Communists have since dealt with their political opponents, especially their judicial murder of Mihailovich, it seems possible that had King Peter returned to join in the guerilla war, he would sooner or later have met his death as the result of an unfortunate accident.

Some time before, in November, 1943, acting on a report by a British officer working with the Partisans, Mr. Churchill had decided to give formal British recognition and support to Tito's Partisans. The tremendous consequences of that decision are now only too clear, for through it the Russian sphere of influence was extended to the Adriatic and the northern borders of Greece. From it also came the succession of manœuvres by which Marshal Tito, calmly outwitting Anglo-American diplomacy, ob-

tained recognition of his Partisan Government and the consequent disavowal of the constitutional Government appointed by King Peter. Step by step Tito carefully negotiated the British and Americans around the awkward corner of legalising a rebel movement, while everybody, other than the young King, pretended that what was happening was democratic and above board.

A little dazed after a severe lecture by Mr. Churchill, King Peter was induced to assist Marshal Tito, firstly by broadcasting a denunciation of Mihailovich and the Chetniks, and secondly by agreeing to appoint a Regency Council, to which he delegated authority to exercise his constitutional powers in Yugoslavia. The three members of this Regency were nominated by Tito himself, a procedure which nobody except King Peter seemed to regard as odd. The Regents once appointed, Tito formed his Government, and got to work. The members of the Regency Council were soon brought into line, with the result that in August, 1945, King Peter withdrew his authority from them. But he was too late. On November 11th, 1945, a one-party election produced a Constituent Assembly which was one-hundred-per-cent for Tito, and which, on the 29th of the same month, unanimously abolished the monarchy and proclaimed a Republic. Having used the King's authority to seize power with the appearance of correct constitutional procedure, which enabled him to demand the country's gold reserves abroad, Marshal Tito lost no time in forcibly converting Yugoslavia into a fully-fledged Communist State.

So the young Princess, born of a morganatic romance, who had dreamed of reigning over the neighbour State of her native Greece, saw her hopes and visions shattered only twenty months after becoming Queen. For there are no chances of a return of the monarchy while Russian dominance remains in Yugoslavia. But there is evidence that much of the growing anti-Communist sentiment in the country is also pro-monarchist, even though the King is believed to have lost prestige by his broadcast against his henchman Mihailovich, and by the appearance he has since given of a certain lack of seriousness.

In July, 1945, the dynasty was consolidated by the birth of Crown Prince Alexander, whose christening at Westminster Abbey in October, when King George VI, in acting as godfather, again demonstrated his friendship, was to many thousands of Yugoslavs a testimony to hope. Those of the Yugoslav nation who do not accept Marshal Tito and his Communist rule look forward to the day when Prince Alexander may be taken by his Royal parents to the country where he will receive the esteem and affection, and perhaps the allegiance, due to a Karageorgevich.

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One of the distinguishing tribulations of Royalty is that in time of war they may find themselves at the head of opposing States. The larger the family and the higher its standing, the more complicated that situation may become. The main Royal dynasties of Europe are all so intricately inter-related that in a major war it is almost impossible for any individual king or prince not to find that his own brothers or sisters or other kin have become technically his enemies.

Thus as soon as war breaks out there are always some members of a family who are faced with a conflict of sympathies to which, theoretically, there can be only one answer—complete loyalty to the State to which the individual belongs at the time. No doubt such loyalties—by a woman, for example, to her husband and newly adopted country—may clash with older affections for the people and country she has learned to love through childhood, especially if she knows that the people love her in equal measure. But these personal sentiments from the memories of youth must be put aside for the new allegiances. She may have to sever the dearest ties of her life. Never must she prejudice the position of either her husband or herself by expressing regard for her native country. Indeed, she must do all that she can to lead the women of her warring people in works of mercy or welfare, and generally to sustain the spirit of the home front, even though every effort may strike against the attachments of her girlhood. And such duties must be acquitted with the sincere desire to be of

service. Any feeling of pretence, or even of inward reservation, will be at once detected by those who are always ready to suspect and condemn the possibility of enemy influence in such circumstances.

Such obligations will be arduous and a test of spiritual courage even when the war is fought for reasons that the conscience can accept. How much more beset with difficulties they become when a wife knows that her husband's country, or a daughter her father's, is the aggressor, and that its manner of making war is contrary to the accepted standards of humanity. Yet again, what dilemmas arise if the occupant of the throne finds his country seized by the enemy and forced, with the connivance of ambitious quislings, to line up with hereditary enemies and help destroy the people to whom his personal regard and affection turn.

The Greek Royal Family have had their fill of such acutely embarrassing problems, and have suffered greatly in the past from unconsidered reactions to provoked suspicion in time of war. It has been already recorded how, in 1914-16, King Constantine and all the members of the Royal Family were condemned primarily because of Queen Sophie's kinship with Kaiser Wilhelm. In the war just concluded, when the following generation had, in their marriages, again spread their ties among the nations of Europe, opportunities could once more have occurred for suspicion of enemy influence, but this time, so far as the Greek Royal Family was concerned, there were no Royal indiscretions for political intriguers to exploit.

Among the unhappiest of Royalty in time of war are surely the mothers whose children are divided among the opposing camps. It is not difficult to imagine the feelings of Princess Andrew, for example, when war broke out between Britain and Germany, and she was faced with the situation of three daughters married to Germans, and her son in the British Navy. Or Princess Nicholas, with a similar cleavage of anxieties between her daughters Marina and Elizabeth, not to mention the unlucky Olga. The Princesses Andrew and Nicholas stayed in Greece during the occupation, for they felt that in their own homes they

could at least retain a grip on one tangible thing in an unstable world. Throughout the occupation both Princesses worked with the Swedish and Swiss Red Cross in Greek hospitals. They were treated courteously by the Germans, but both refused to accept favours proffered by reason of their German connections

For the Duchess of Kent the question assumed a different aspect. How could she regard her sister Elizabeth as an enemy, or her sister Olga as inimical to the Allies? On the other hand, could Prince Philip, serving afloat among Britishers, avoid giving an occasional thought to his sisters, all good German citizens? Especially difficult was the problem facing the Crown Princess Frederica, who yet showed her steadfastness to the Greek cause, and to the cause of freedom, at a time when her four brothers, German princes by birth, were engaged, as was their duty, in the service of their country. Her attitude in Athens in 1940-41 had to be formally correct to all the neutrals, to Germans as much as to Americans, yet her sense of diplomacy was such that, as already noted, no serious voice of suspicion was ever raised against her or the Crown Prince, even during the difficult days when the Germans were about to invade.

These relationships with the enemy, indirect though some of them were, no doubt held their moments of difficulty for the individuals concerned, but they did not present the same personal problems and risks that were run by Greek-born members of the family who were unfortunate enough to be detained forcibly in the hands of the enemy. Of these, King George's sister, Princess Irene, was to be subjected to the greatest hardship and indignity. In July, 1939, she married the popular Duke of Spoleto. Tall, slim and handsome, she made a stately figure at the imposing ceremony in the Cathedral of Florence. It was significant of the attitude that Italy was already adopting to Greece that although a Prince of the House of Savoy had chosen a Greek Princess as his bride, and although the King of Greece was present at the ceremony, no Greek flags were flown at the celebrations, nor any Greek hymns sung.

Fifteen months after the marriage Italy invaded Greece without warning. The treachery of the Italian attack and

the inhuman way in which much of it was carried out naturally distressed Princess Irene, and indeed excited her bitter resentment. Inwardly she suffered at the manner in which her beloved Greece was treated, first by her husband's country, and then by its Axis partner. Yet her loyalty to her husband forbade her to compromise him by speech or action openly sympathetic to Greece. She busied herself in Red Cross work, and in her humanitarianism gained the esteem of the Italians without sacrificing her own self-respect.

But as the war progressed the situation became more and more intolerable for her. Her husband's elder brother, the Duke of Aosta, died as a prisoner in British hands in Africa. Succeeding to the senior title, her husband was nominated by Mussolini to the Crown of the puppet-State of Croatia. The Duke demonstrated his resistance to this unsought elevation by never setting foot in Croatia, but this action won Mussolini's anger. The Duchess, sometimes unable to resist expressing outspoken compassion for the sufferings of the Greeks, did not add to the family's popularity. When Italy was invaded, and the country was divided into two camps, the Duke escaped to the area in possession of the Allies, but the Duchess was trapped in the German-occupied zone.

When the armistice with the Italians was signed on September 8th, 1943, she was staying in Florence, where also resided her widowed sister-in-law, the previous Duchess of Aosta (sister of Prince Christopher's second wife), with her two young girls. When the Germans entered the city in the general movement northwards, they permitted the two Duchesses to stay under surveillance in their respective houses. The city was frequently subjected to air bombing, an unhappy background for Princess Irene, who was expecting a baby. A heavy bombardment on September 23rd caused the child to be born eighteen days prematurely. The birth could be announced only in the local papers, and so the Duke did not then learn that he had become a father.

Soon the S.S. began paying "protective" visits, and as, in the summer of 1944, the noise of battle drew near to the city, the Germans let the two women understand that they

were not to attempt to escape, otherwise they would receive the same kind of punishment as the daughters of the King of Italy, Princess Maria, who was interned, and Princess Mafalda, who was sent to Buchenwald, and later killed.

In June, just when they hoped liberation was near, they were suddenly ordered to leave the city, and were taken by the S.S. to a family estate near Milan. During the trip the party was several times subjected to air attacks, and the women had then to take the baby and the two little girls to the shelter of nearby farms or sheds until the danger periods were over. They stayed on the estate under reasonable conditions for some weeks, and hoped that they might be allowed to remain there. They were to be sharply disillusioned. On July 26th, whilst quietly eating their dinner, they were unceremoniously interrupted by a group of S.S. officers, bristling with weapons, who ordered them to be ready within the hour to leave for Germany. Their indignant protests were rudely put aside. The baby, Prince Amedeo, who was unwell, had to be wakened from his cot and prepared for travelling. Small baggage was hastily packed, under the reminder by the S.S. of limited space and the need for speed. The party left the castle in four cars, machine-guns projecting from the windows in case of an attempted rescue by Partisans. After a pause in Milan, while the Duchesses' renewed protests against their seizure were overruled by the local German commander, they continued the journey through the night, arriving at Innsbruck next day after a fifteen hours' non-stop drive. Here they were placed in an hotel adjoining the railway station—a frequent bombing target—and kept under close S.S. guard. Fortunately no bombing occurred while they were there, but the building collapsed shortly after they left.

A couple of days later they were taken as “ diplomatic internees ” to a camp at Hirschegg, in Austrian Bavaria, about fifty miles from Lake Constance. Their place of internment was a primitive mountain hotel, nearly 4,000 feet above sea-level. Here, as their companions, were thirty-five other internees, Italians and Frenchmen, Belgians, Serbs and others, one of whom was the former French Ambassador to Berlin, M. François Poncet.

The two Duchesses and their young children were confined in this hamlet for ten months, with no contact with the outside world. They received no letters or parcels, although many were sent from Italy and Switzerland. All the internees ate together in a large room. The food was, at first, adequate, although crudely cooked, but as the months passed it deteriorated in quantity and in quality, to the point sometimes of maggots appearing in the soup. Eggs, milk and butter were never supplied, nor was it possible to obtain extras or make purchases. For the last four months of their confinement, turnips and potatoes provided the normal diet. Princess Irene was continually in a state of anxiety over the feeding of her child, but could get no help from the camp "jailer". The owner of the hotel and the S.S. guard ate separately from the internees, and were always well fed.

There was no doctor, other than an incompetent village practitioner, and Princess Irene was not allowed to send for a German specialist when her child grew sick owing to the drastic routine under which they lived. Fortunately, her Red Cross training helped her greatly in looking after her child. Although not normally treated harshly, they were subjected to many restrictions, but these counted for little compared with the lack of food and clothing. As the months passed their condition grew worse. Clothes wore out and could not be replaced, and with the coming of winter weather, their spirits began to weaken under the continued strain of trying to keep both the children and themselves free from illness. Snow fell at the beginning of November and remained until May. The temperature dropped to 20° C. below zero. Fuel supplies ran low, heating was restricted, often there was no warm water with which to wash the baby and his clothes. Their hardships were eased at times by the kindness of some of the local people, including the village priest, and also the Polish impressed servants who did the heavy work of the hotel. But most of the population of the district were themselves in too poor a state to be able to give much practical aid.

As things got worse for Germany during the first months of 1945, and the French armies entered Austria, the internees

were treated with even greater severity. German troops fleeing before the advancing Allies were hiding in the woods around the village, and these desperate men threatened to shoot every one of the prisoners. For a time this danger hung so close that the Duchess spent agonised hours wondering how best to hold her child when the time came, so that he should be instantly killed. Fortunately the risk was averted by Austrian Partisans, who declared that they would shoot fifty German fugitives for every internee executed. But months afterwards the Duchess learnt that at this time orders were actually on the way from Berlin to Hirschegg, directing that the internees should be shot before German troops left the district. Fortunately, in the general dislocation caused by the Allied advance, the order was held up in the post-office of a nearby town.

On May 2nd, the jailer was shot by the Partisans. Freedom came as the French approached. Although still on the verge of starvation, the internees no longer lived in dread. A few days later the camp was taken over by French troops, and the internees were sent away in an assortment of vehicles. After a delay in Kreutzlingen, while identities were checked, they were allowed to cross the frontier into Switzerland. The two Duchesses tried to return to Italy, but had to wait two months before they could do so. At last, in July, they went to Chiasso, from where they were taken by American forces by car to Milan, and then by air to Capodichino Airport at Naples. Here they were met by the Dowager Duchess and the Duke of Aosta, who was at last able to embrace his son, born among the enemy, grown in imprisonment, and already able to walk and talk, and to greet his wife, reduced by anxiety and privation to a shadow of her former self.

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Two-and-a-half years later, tragedy came again to Princess Irene. Her husband died while on a visit to South America. The little prince, whose earliest years passed so perilously in captivity, became heir to his father's dukedom, and was accorded the title of the Duke of Aosta.

CHAPTER X

IN THE CAMP OF THE ENEMY

It was her marriage that placed Princess Irene among her native country's enemies, but her sister, Princess Helen, Queen Mother of Roumania, was trapped in the enemy camp because of her devotion to her son, the boy King Michael, whom she had joined when, for the second time, he succeeded his father, King Carol II. This was the second time, too, that Princess Helen had gone to Roumania to take her place next to the throne. For since the day, twenty years before, when as a glowing bride she had gone blithely to her new destiny in Bucharest, she had suffered many frustrations and disillusionments. Undemonstrative, and a little shy, she had given her heart to her dashing, romantic husband, and to the promise that he seemed to bestow of a happy married life in the service of her new country. On his part, the Crown Prince was at first captivated, not only by her pleasing charm and physical attraction, but also by a tantalising reserve that was so entirely different from the sophisticated emotion so often encountered in the warm Roumanian character.

Launched on their married life in the splendid ceremony of the Orthodox Church in the Cathedral of Athens, and acclaimed in great public gatherings in both capitals, the Royal couple passed the first months of their married life happily enough in a sumptuous villa in the Kyselef Avenue in Bucharest. Full of good intentions, the young Princess looked eagerly towards the obligations of her role as the future Queen of Roumania. But her high hopes were to be quickly thwarted, for as the freshness of the romance waned, so a rift began to develop out of the differences in their background and disposition. As a consequence of her simply ordered girlhood at Tatoi, she inclined to the secluded domesticity of her house and English garden in

the Sinaia hills. In Bucharest she preferred the pleasures of a cultured and unpretentious home life, and could not quickly adjust herself to the exuberant gaieties of "the Little Paris". With a discretion that was natural to her, she chose her new associates carefully, restricting her intimate contacts to a small group of families of the more retiring elements of the aristocracy. But all these tendencies clashed with Prince Carol's volatile personality, so much in tune with the restless excitements of the pleasure-loving capital. He liked a turn at the tables in the Casino at Sinaia, and was fond of mixing informally among a set of lively people whom Princess Helen showed she did not understand. It was not long before he began to neglect the sober routine of his life at home and to seek out the associates of his bachelor days.

The birth of a son in October, 1921, failed to arrest the growing disunion. Princess Helen's knowledge of her husband's adventures hurt her sensibilities as a woman no less than her pride as a member of a regal house, and so she withdrew further into her reserve. The love which they both displayed for their son as he grew older did not help to bring them together, for it had become clear to Princess Helen that however strong had been the original attraction, she and her husband were now irretrievably separated by a fundamental disharmony of temperament and character. Even the broad-minded people of Bucharest, who had hoped that the breach between the two would one day be healed, eventually came to understand that Helen's feelings had been injured too deeply for reconciliation.

Prince Carol's continued indiscretions exposed him to the anger of his father, King Ferdinand, as well as to wide public criticism, especially from the anti-Semitic elements that resented his association with Madame Lupescu, an attractive Jewess. He reacted with characteristic vigour by renouncing the throne and retiring into exile with Madame Lupescu. He was at once deprived constitutionally of his rights of inheritance.

In 1926, at the age of five, young Michael thus became the Grand Voivod, or successor designate, to his grandfather, and the following year, on King Ferdinand's death

in July, he was proclaimed King under a Regency. Princess Helen lavished on him all the devotion and care of which she was capable, and her reward was an affection that did much to fill the emptiness of her existence. But she would not forgive Carol, and now she insisted on a divorce. In her unhappy married life, the fault had not been hers, for she had borne many humiliations with dignity and restraint, and had never forfeited the respect and sympathy of the Roumanian people. They accepted her decision, and her marriage was dissolved by the Supreme Court of Bucharest in the summer of 1928.

But, as a woman of foreign birth, Princess Helen could do little to control the political wranglings and manœuvrings that developed during the period of the Regency. These weaknesses caused so pronounced a decline in the efficiency of government and administration that widespread demands were made for Carol's return. The self-exiled Prince, who had now changed his mind about the renunciation of the throne, was contacted by influential leaders, and in June, 1930, made a dramatic air flight to Bucharest. Within two days he was proclaimed King, and Michael became once more the Crown Prince.

Statesmen of all parties hoped that the break would be healed between the King and "Her Majesty the Princess Helen", as she was now officially described, or, as the people knew her, the *Regina Mama*. In a burst of optimism, provisional arrangements were made for them to be crowned together at the coronation in September. But Madame Lupescu returned to Bucharest in August. Not only did all hopes of reconciliation immediately disappear, but Queen Helen would not endure so embarrassing a situation, and after an affecting good-bye scene with Michael, she left the country and joined her mother, Queen Sophie, in exile in Florence. Here, cut off from the son in whom all her interests were concentrated, she lived in an unhappy seclusion, alleviated only by the presence of her mother, her sister Katherine, and other relatives, and by the affection which the city of Florence won from her, partly because her dormant artistic temperament was in tune with the atmosphere of this ancient centre of art and culture. In time

she turned again to the painting, drawing and design for which she had shown an aptitude as a young girl.

Meanwhile, her son was being brought up with a pretence of realism that ignored essentials. For while the King, with memories of his own cramped boyhood, caused the Crown Prince to be educated in company with a small group of boys drawn from the various races and classes of the country he neglected to give his son any useful instruction in the duties of kingship, other than to let him take part in certain ceremonial duties and visits. Prince Michael went with his father on the visit to London in November, 1938, where Carol tried vainly to obtain more than gestures of succour from Britain and France, and then to Berchtesgaden, where the King sought to resist the Nazi designs that he well realised threatened his country. But when the Allies abandoned Roumania to her fate, he was forced to make trade and other agreements under German pressure, and finally succumbed to the Nazi protégé, the red-haired Marshal Ion Antonescu, whom in desperation he had appointed as Prime Minister. Under the "Red Dog's" threats that if he were not to abdicate civil strife and insurrection by the Nazi-inspired Iron Guards would follow, King Carol relinquished the throne to his son in September, 1940. The new King, then aged nineteen, forlorn and resentful of his position as a tool of the dictator who had overthrown his father, did not remain alone for long, for Queen Helen at once left Florence and joined him.

With all power concentrated in his hands, Antonescu placed Roumania and its resources unreservedly at Germany's disposal, and started to prepare for participation in the war against Russia. Neither the Queen Mother nor King Michael was permitted to leave the country, for Hitler had decided that the retention of the dynasty in the person of a boy king under a quisling dictator would help to keep the nation subservient and co-operative. The young king strove, with the aid of his mother, to overcome his lack of experience. He soon learnt to withdraw as much as possible from association with the dictatorship, and thus mother and son spent most of the next four years in seclusion in the Royal estates. Antonescu regarded the

King as a puppet, and subjected him to close personal control. Although so young, Michael appreciated the situation and chafed impatiently at it, but he was powerless.

The war came to Roumania. Her troops and air forces helped in the reconquest of Bessarabia, which Russia had appropriated in 1939, and in the drive to Odessa and beyond. Roumanian forces were also sent against Stalingrad, where they suffered severe losses. This eager and extended participation in the Russian campaign by the ambitious Antonescu and his supporters was unpopular with a large number of Roumanians with secret pro-Allied sympathies, at the head of whom were the King and his mother. But so firmly was the country in the grip of the militarists, backed by the German "missions" and other military formations, that no voice could be raised in protest. Those who did expose their sympathy with the Allies, or who were known to have possessed them in the past, went into concentration camps.

All through these difficult days Queen Helen stood close behind her son, guiding, advising and supporting him while, with quick intelligence, he acquired the knowledge and character to take the burden of his responsibilities upon his own broad shoulders. He saw that while German fortunes were ascendant, his position was one of impotence, and he resigned himself to the inevitable, biding his time for the future. He accepted, although often coldly and ungraciously, the tasks which Antonescu forced upon him. He went through the motions of acknowledging the German overlordship by awarding decorations and visiting military units. He was made to accompany his ministers to the Crimea, and to take part in other war-area inspections.

Later events were to show that these actions were all part of a process of dissimulation. For to the King and Queen Helen these acts were performed under duress, and were thus mortifying indignities to which they submitted only because of patient belief in the ultimate victory of the Allies. Their attitude to the Nazi generals by whom they were surrounded was, with few exceptions, consistently non-committal. They avoided entertaining Germans by refusing to give receptions or other personal hospitality on

account of war conditions. But by adhering to a correct and dignified bearing, they retained the integrity of their position even in the eyes of the enemy.

Under cover of this situation Queen Helen tried to do something to ease the sufferings to which Greece was being subjected. Ever since the Italian and German invasions she had heard of the plight of her native country with a distress and indignation that was shared by the many Greek communities in Roumania. She made protests, directly and indirectly, to the local German authorities, but these were received with indifference, and achieved nothing. Eventually she persuaded the Germans to allow special trains to be sent to Greece carrying food, medical stores and other supplies collected by Greek organisations, with the aid of contributions made by sympathetic Roumanians. The trains left Roumania, but no news was heard of their arrival. Finally, through neutrals, the Queen learned that her efforts had done little to relieve the situation in Greece, for most of the stores were looted before the carriages reached Greek territory.

Queen Helen was not allowed to go to Greece, or even to try to contact friends there, although she did manage to send some parcels of supplies. During the war she never left Roumania, save for brief trips to Florence, and once to Berlin, when King Michael was made to go there. These visits excepted, the King left Roumania only on the few official tours sponsored by Antonescu.

Throughout the whole period of the German advances into Russia, and the subsequent phase of retreat to the West, the King was outwardly a tractable, if often sulky, figure-head, and his mother merely his equally acquiescent shadow. But inwardly neither of them accepted the situation. Open resistance would have led to their confinement, probably in Germany, and so would have deprived the anti-Nazi elements in the country of their only possible rallying centre. Not that there were in Roumania enough pro-Allied people free to organise an armed resistance such as grew up in other occupied countries. There was no widespread Communist underground organisation on which to base an active resistance, and apart from a handful of

drawing-room intellectuals, most of the few hardened Communists that Roumania possessed were in concentration camps. There was, however, a group of enterprising plotters, mostly officers, in secret radio contact with British Headquarters in the Middle East. This group made several attempts to fly out Dr. Iuliu Maniu, the leading statesman, and other representative figures, to negotiate with the Allies, but these plans all fell through because of a certain lack of resolution at high levels.

The King was in indirect touch with these plotters, but for a different purpose. His object was to overthrow the Antonescu regime, and to put his country at the side of the Allies. He was not the only Roumanian to hold this secret ambition, for almost the whole country shared it. But although the chief political personalities, Maniu, Bratianu and Petrescu, who spoke for more than ninety-nine per cent of the population, and Patrascanu, who represented the tiny Communist element, were in full agreement with the idea of rising against Antonescu and his supporters, each leader felt that he had not the means or opportunities to undertake so hazardous an enterprise. Neither were they anxious to be embroiled in some rash and desperate exploit, such as they feared the King's youth might precipitate. They therefore contented themselves with plotting and waiting for something to happen.

But King Michael appeared to be in no position to strike any sort of blow against the masters of his country. His every movement and his every contact were known to the Marshal. The only troops he was allowed to control were a few hundred officers and men of the Royal Guards. As he well knew, apart from his Guards, there were few, even in the Army, on whom he could rely in a close association in violent action. Thus he warily kept his own counsel and made his own plans. Under cover of his outward show of subjection to Antonescu he built up carefully and secretly a small band of intimate supporters whom he could trust when the moment came. For he knew that the moment would certainly come, and as the Germans, under the pressure of the 1944 Russian offensive, retreated westward from the Ukraine and started to build up their forces

to defend Roumania, he waited impatiently for it to appear.

On August 20th, 1944, the Russian armies stood poised on the northern frontiers of Roumania. They had halted in their advance in order to assemble the necessary strength for this task, for they knew that forty German divisions faced them, as well as some twenty divisions of the Roumanian Army—troops which had already shown their tough fighting qualities. The formidable defensive system was built on the tremendous bastion of the Carpathian Mountains, and the Russians fully realised that to try to break through this barrier would cost them heavy losses, and that they might well fail in the attempt.

Suddenly, at the critical moment, the whole situation changed. In a broadcast from Bucharest on the evening of the 23rd, King Michael proclaimed that the Antonescu dictatorship had been overthrown, that he had appointed a pro-Allied Government, and that he had sought an armistice with the Russians. Action followed immediately. The Roumanian Army was ordered to withdraw from its front-line positions, leaving gaps through which the Soviet formations poured without resistance. The twenty Roumanian divisions that had been fighting against them became fifteen divisions fighting the Germans, the balance being sent into captivity by the Russians, who from now on ignored their acceptance of the Roumanian armistice proposals. In forty-eight hours the Roumanian Army had taken 60,000 German prisoners. The defensive system collapsed. The German forces stationed in the neighbourhood of the capital were wiped out by Roumanian troops. The main Russian drive quickly penetrated the country, encircled the trapped German forces, and drove others into the hands of the Roumanians.

For four weeks the Roumanian Army covered the advance and deployment of the Soviet forces as they flooded across the country towards Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. By the end of August, Roumanian troops were co-operating with the Russians in attacking German-Hungarian forces on the north-western frontier. The Soviets had advanced over 600 miles on a 1000-mile

front without serious fighting. The Roumanian railways and oil were at their disposal, practically undamaged, for the Germans had been too surprised for sabotage.

Within a matter of a few weeks the whole strategic position had turned against Germany. In addition to her heavy losses in troops and war materials, she had been deprived of the vital oil and food supplies that made Roumania so rich a prize. And, save for one tenuous supply line, she was isolated from her garrisons holding Greece nearly 1,000 miles from their base. The precarious position of her Balkan troops soon forced a succession of withdrawals from Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, that were the beginning of the end of Germany's ambitions in South-Eastern Europe.

What had happened to change the situation so completely that the Russians, instead of flinging their armies against the Carpathian fortress, were now within striking distance of Belgrade and Budapest? How had the Roumanians been able to throw aside the Nazi shackles that had bound them so closely for four years? The answer to these questions was not widely publicised. All that the outside world learned was that a *coup d'état* had taken place, and that King Michael had had something to do with it. But little was known at the time of the share that the young King had actually taken in this dramatic and important event, for within a few days of the arrival of the Russian forces in Bucharest a strict Press censorship clamped down on all but the barest outlines of local happenings.

At the time of the *coup d'état* I was serving in Fighter Command in England. A few weeks later I was posted to the Allied Control Commission for Roumania, and in September flew from Italy to Bucharest in an American Air Force Fortress. As I was the first British officer to enter the capital since the war began, except for a couple of prisoners and three special-service officers, I was made the recipient of a mass of information about recent occurrences. From the pro-Allied Roumanians with whom I at once came into contact, and also later from the participants themselves, I learned of the Royal leadership in an action that was decisive for Germany on her south-eastern front.



King Paul and Crown Prince Constantine entering the Cathedral for the Lying-in-State

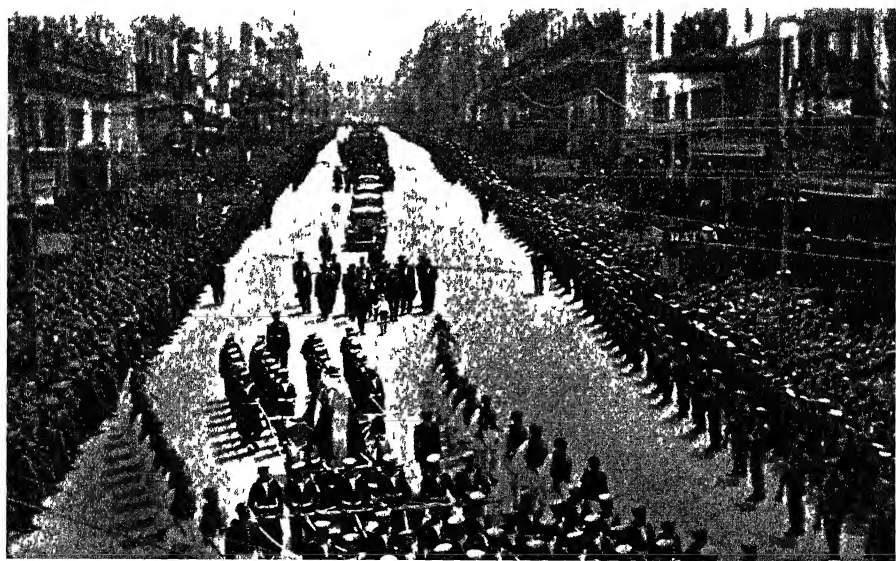
The King and Queen pause outside the Cathedral, after the funeral service. In the group behind the Crown Prince and his sisters, are, L to R Queen Helen, the Duchess of Aosta, Princess Nicholas, Princess Katherine, Princess Andrew and Prince Peter





Evzones of the Palace Guard kiss the ikon on the bier of the late King

The Funeral Cortege of King George II.



The outside schemes to overthrow the dictatorship had never neared realisation. After lengthy and ambitious plannings by the Middle East Intelligence staff, the three British officers were parachuted into Roumania in the autumn of 1943, and were at once made prisoners. Both the King and his fellow plotters felt that to try to overthrow the Antonescu regime, buttressed with German power, was impossible without Allied assistance in the form of airborne troops. But the Allies did not respond to the proposals made by the famous elder statesman, Prince Stirbey, who managed to make his way to Egypt in 1943.

King Michael knew, as did his advisers, that they must act without Allied support. Several times during 1943 he had considered action, but the Germans were too strong, the Russians too far away. But on August 20th, when the Russian attack broke, he knew that the hour had struck. Through the secret link with the Allies, he sent a warning of forthcoming events to General Maitland-Wilson, and asked for bombing support on the 27th. But on the 22nd, the King learnt that Antonescu had arranged to leave for the front next day. None of the political plotters was to be contacted, as they had gone into hiding until the 27th. The King had to act on his own responsibility. He sent for Antonescu on the afternoon of the 23rd, and after pointing out the gravity of the situation caused by the Russian break-through, called on the dictator to seek an armistice or to resign. Antonescu refused to do either.

The King had no one to consult but a few Palace intimates, but he decided to act. Everything depended on seizing Antonescu and his chief collaborators before they could raise the alarm with their German allies. With incredible boldness, which in itself helped to achieve success, the King, with the help of his aides, his school-mate private secretary, and a few others of the Palace conspirators, arrested him out of hand. The men of the Marshal's heavily armed personal bodyguard, waiting in the courtyard below, were tricked and locked up by the Palace ceremonial guards. One by one Antonescu's sup-

porters were sent for, arrested and put in confinement. A new government was formed by one of the King's helpers, General Sanatescu. King Michael broadcast to the nation and called on his army and every Roumanian to help drive out the Nazi enemy.

Next day the fleeing Germans carried out a revengeful air bombardment of the Royal Palace and of State and other prominent buildings in Bucharest. But the King, expecting some such action, had set out in the night with a convoy of cars for a refuge near the distant town of Targu-Jui, at the western frontier. Queen Helen left Sinaia for the same destination, driving often through countryside occupied by German troops.

In staging his *coup d'état* against the quisling dictator and his henchmen, King Michael knew that he was risking his crown, and probably his life. His associates certainly risked their lives, for Antonescu had kept close control of the Army, through the many senior officers who were his eager supporters, and could also call on the assistance of German troops in Bucharest. The stroke was so bold, so unexpected, from the supposedly harmless King, imprisoned on his throne, that Antonescu could offer no reaction except wild temper and threats of execution for the morrow. Similarly all his supporters walked unsuspectingly one by one into the trap set so artfully for them.

At the time of the *coup* King Michael was only twenty-three years old, and most of those nearest to him in the conspiracy were youngsters of his own age. They knew that if they were to fail, many thousands of lives, and many as yet undamaged cities, including Bucharest, would be sacrificed in the desperate fighting with which a Russian invasion would have been resisted. But they did not fail. Everything had been carefully thought out, nothing went wrong. And King Michael, as he told me, with occasional flashes of youthful enthusiasm, enjoyed the day as the most exciting of his life.

Queen Helen had shared in the formulation of the plot from its earliest conception, but could do nothing when the time came but wait in suspense at her residence in the Peleş Castle grounds at Sinaia for the telephone call that

would announce success or failure. She guessed that the seizure of the dictator and his friends had been planned for that day, the 23rd. No specific arrangements had been made for her and her attendants to join King Michael if the *coup* were successful, although luggage, food and weapons were ready for emergency. But the Queen told me she had made no plans for escape in case of failure. Where could she have found refuge then? So she waited all through the afternoon and evening, not knowing whether the telephone call would announce that Antonescu had fallen, or that her son was captive or perhaps dead—not knowing, indeed, whether the first intimation of failure might not come in the form of German troops entering the Palace to arrest her.

At last a messenger came to say that all was well. Late in the night King Michael spoke cryptically on the wireless telephone, and later still came the call for her to join him immediately. She did not then know her destination, but within an hour her convoy of cars, with military escort, set off. Throughout the long drive she knew that an enemy patrol might stop them, for the Germans were as bitterly anxious to seize her as they were the King. The Queen herself sat for hours with an unaccustomed pistol in her hand, ready to help resist. But luck favoured boldness, and they were not intercepted. King Michael's convoy was less fortunate, for it narrowly escaped conflict with a German motorised column.

Such was the thrilling climax to the long years of frustration that Queen Helen had endured. In that one bold action by her son, with its far-reaching consequences, she saw the achievement of his manhood, the fruition of the years of care and companionship she had given him. That this devotion is mutual, that an unforced affection and a close harmony exist always between mother and son, is there for all to see who are permitted to know them. My first meeting with the King and Queen Mother, at an informal reception given by the officers of the Royal Horse Guards, was followed by several visits to the Royal residences in Bucharest and at Sinaia. In Bucharest, because his own palace was still uninhabitable after the bomb-

ings, the King entertained at the mansion in the Kyselef Avenue, belonging to his aunt, Princess Elizabeth, former wife of Queen Helen's brother, King George. The Princess discussed the Greek situation with me, and asked about my experiences in the 1941 campaign, but it was not difficult to see that her interests were now directed to the delicate situation in which her own country was placed.

It was during these visits that I noticed the unaffected understanding between the King and his mother, even though outwardly their characters are different. The Queen charms everyone by her complete naturalness and simplicity, no matter with whom she speaks. The King, on the other hand, often carries with strangers an air of aloofness, but this disappears at once if he senses that his companion is at ease. With friends, he is frank and informal, with a ready smile that completely transforms his sometimes sombre expression.

King Michael impressed me, as he did all the British and Americans serving in Bucharest, with his dignified bearing and unforced friendliness. My acquaintance with him ripened quickly because of his interest in flying. Mechanically minded since childhood, he had on his own initiative learned to be a pilot, and to-day could earn his living in any commercial airline. He invited me to fly with him at Popesti airfield, and took me round the country several times in a Fock-Wulf plane, showing himself to possess bold and skilful judgment. He later flew with me in a small American twin-engined passenger plane, belonging to the British Mission, and gave me the use of one of his own aeroplanes, a small German monoplane trainer. Afterwards he bought the British Mission aeroplane, and learned to pilot it. This is the plane in which, in 1947, he flew to London with his mother to attend the Royal wedding.

Gradually during these encounters I learned from the King the story of the Palace *coup d'état*, an account later amplified by the Queen, and by some of those who had had a share in it. As I pieced the tale together, I realised with what personal satisfaction the young King had repaid Antonescu's disastrous misdirection of his country. The "Red Dog" eventually suffered dearly for his ambitions,

for, handed over to the Russians, he and his associates were held in confinement for two years before being tried and executed by the Roumanian Communist Government. The King could only deplore such long-protracted misery.

Uncertainty lay in the new Roumanian policy. The King took a heavy responsibility in deciding to place his country in the hands of the Russians, who had good cause to be vengeful for the Roumanian share in the spoliation of the Crimea and Odessa. He was realist enough to know that the only possible policy for Roumania was to discard the previous national heritage of distrust and hatred for Russia, and to enter on a phase of friendly collaboration. But he never expected the harsh, oppressive treatment that was meted out to his people, nor did he anticipate that Britain and America would abandon Roumania, except for an occasional note of disapproval, to a reign of terrorist rule even worse than that imposed by the Nazis. The story of the ravages inflicted on the country by the Soviet Armies, while 150,000 Roumanian troops gave their lives fighting the Germans during the seven months that followed the *coup d'état*, is now known to history, although too often put aside as an inconvenient affair to remember. Equally ignored was the seizure of farm products, horses, cattle and implements, that turned the rich Roumanian plains, once the granary of Eastern Europe, into a starvation area; while the disclosure of murder, rape and robbery in Bucharest and the big cities was one to which the civilised world had become too accustomed to make much protest.

All through this difficult period King Michael, with the Queen Mother ever at his side, saw his prestige steadily increase, for, despite the insults and humiliations heaped upon him by both Russian and Roumanian Communists, his boldness in the *coup d'état* won him the ineradicable admiration and affection of all but a small minority. That his personal courage gave service to Russia was recognised by the award in July, 1945, of the highest Soviet military honour, the Order of Victory. "For a courageous act of decision in reversing Roumania's policy, breaking with

Hitlerite Germany and making an alliance with the United Nations at a time when the defeat of Germany was not yet clearly in sight." The Russian award was later followed by that of the American Legion of Merit. The Russian gesture followed inexplicably on a phase of bullying. In March, 1945, the Russian Control Commission in Bucharest ordered the King to dismiss the pro-Allied Government and replace it with another dominated by Communists, and headed by the nominal Communist leader, Dr. Petru Groza. The King boldly refused. Andrei Vichinsky, Soviet Master of the Balkans, flew hurriedly to Bucharest, and with provocative rudeness that included door-slaming, gave the King a two-hour ultimatum to accept the Groza Government. The King submitted, but later, in August, with the encouragement of the British and American Missions in Bucharest, rejected Groza and called on the "Big Three"—Russia, Britain and the U.S.A.—to help him establish a democratic regime. Faced by an obdurate Russia, Britain and America gave way, and left the King to suffer the consequences of his action.

King Michael, discomfited but firm, commenced his famous "strike", retiring to his Sinaia estate, and refusing to deal with the Government. He returned to Bucharest in January after a meeting between Vichinsky and British and United States representatives, from which resulted the temporary broadening of the Government and its recognition by the Western Powers, and their "guarantees" of democratic rights. Having gone through the proper motions and so salved the conscience of Western public opinion, the Communists started their usual technique of eliminating the Opposition parties and their leaders, and establishing Communism under the protective presence of nearly a million Russian troops.

Realising that Britain and the United States could do nothing to help his country, King Michael adopted his own *modus vivendi* with the Communist Government. He would not abandon his post, for he knew, as the Communists knew, that his immense popularity among the peasantry and townsfolk was the chief safeguard against

civil disturbance. He tried to co-operate formally with the Government, and took part in public ceremonies that wore the air of constitutional correctness. On such occasions, the Communists were trained to shout "Long Live Stalin" and "Long Live Michael" alternately. But at all his public appearances there were, in addition to the staged Communist outbursts, genuine demonstrations of the affection in which he was held by that large part of the people who regarded him as a symbol of hope for a form of government in the future that would be free from repression and fear.

But as the Communist grip tightened on the country, and especially when the rule of existence became clear—"Be a Communist or starve!"—so the attitude of the Government became more intransigent towards the monarchy. Laws were passed and put into effect, Ministers were arrested and tried, new Communist Ministers were appointed, all regardless of whether or not the King, as Constitutional Head of the State, gave his official confirmation. The outstanding example up to the time of the King's visit to England for the Royal Wedding was the trial, with life sentence, of Dr. Maniu, which was carried out in spite of King Michael's refusal to sign any of the papers connected with the case.

But although King Michael took the personal responsibility of opposing Government action, he would not align himself with any of the elements in the country who were hostile to the Communist rule, especially those in the Army, which, except for a few pro-Communist careerists, was devoted to him. He knew how dangerous such an open association would be to his adherents. He knew, too, that any appeal to his people for support would have led to uprisings with but one result—the bloody repression by Russian arms of a "rebellion by reactionary forces".

During all this ominous phase, King Michael, sustained always by the spirit and intelligence of the Queen Mother, showed not only resolution and sagacity well beyond his years, but also something of the fatalistic courage and resilience so typical of the indigenous Roumanian character. He bore with restraint and fortitude the increasing pressure

against the monarchy and its buttresses. He lived a lonely life, shared only by Queen Helen and the Court officials. The few personal friends who kept in touch with them did so at the risk of arrest and imprisonment. The King witnessed his ex-Ministers and officers and other high officials, even those who were close to him in the *coup d'état*, vilified, persecuted, arrested, kept in crowded prisons without trial, and, finally, some of them "liquidated". He knew the risks he ran as well as any of the friends in Roumania and elsewhere who were worried about his safety. He had to exercise the greatest care in his private conversations, even in his own residence at Sinaia, for he knew that the Government would seize and exploit any opportunity he might give them by openly criticising the Communist regime.

But although as month succeeded month, and both King Michael and Queen Helen sensed that they were nearing the precipice, neither would give in, nor consider any show of trepidation. Even the possibility of some sudden violent international development that might result in his seizure and possible trial did not weaken the King, nor prevent his mother from returning to Roumania after visits to Switzerland for her health, and to Athens for her brother George's funeral and her sister Katherine's wedding.

But King Michael knew well enough that events in Eastern Europe were moving steadily towards a climax. For Russia had passed the word to her satellites to consolidate the pattern of Communist dominance. At the Cominform meeting in Poland there is little doubt that Moscow declared there was no longer need to continue the pretence of democracy in Roumania, and that the time had come to end the monarchy, so great an anomaly in the Soviet structure. But action presented difficulties. King Michael wore the Soviet Order of Victory and was the idol of three-quarters of his countrymen. To close his reign by violent means might prove tactically embarrassing.

When the King announced his desire to visit London with his mother, to attend the wedding of his second cousin, Prince Philip, the problem seemed solved. For,

apart from the few war-time visits, he had been a prisoner in Roumania since he assumed the Crown in 1940, and the Communist leaders not unnaturally anticipated that once he left the country he would never voluntarily return. They therefore gave his trip their blessing, and allowed him to take out a number of his entourage as an encouragement never to come back.

Thus they hoped soon to be able to proclaim to the Roumanian people that their King had deserted them, that he had fled because he was conscious of his guilt as the enemy of freedom, and so on. Secure in this expectation, they set about demonstrating their recently declared adherence to the Cominform. Marshal Tito visited Bucharest and signed a Pact of Friendship and Military Co-operation. The ex-deserter Bodnaraş, head of the Secret Police, N.K.V.D., became War Minister, and the Rabbi's daughter, Anna Pauker, who had established her devotion to Communism by denouncing her husband to the O.G.P.U., became Foreign Minister. The pro-monarchy Diplomatic Corps in Bucharest was dismissed *en bloc*, and members who were abroad resigned in protest. The stage was set to pronounce a Republic as soon as the King should expose his hoped-for intention not to return.

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In following King Michael's fortunes, the story has passed on almost to the present day. But now the scene moves back again to Greece and England and Egypt, to the phase that followed the campaign in Crete, and the establishment of a Greek Government in exile.

CHAPTER XI

DECLINE FROM GLORY

HAVING achieved the non-Axis world's approval of his magnificent leadership, King George could perhaps have expected that when the time came for the liberation of Greece he would return to his people at the head of his triumphant troops. Various other Royal leaders of Europe went into exile during the war, and although none of them ever assumed such heavy responsibilities as had King George in the fight against Italy and Germany, all automatically resumed their station among their peoples as soon as their countries were liberated.

But King George, "the most heroic figure of them all", was not allowed to return when Greece was freed from the German invader, not even though he publicly announced his undertaking to abide by a plebiscite upon whether the monarchy should or should not remain. The Italian Royal House, with its record of fascist collaboration, was permitted to stay in Italy while a plebiscite decided its fate, but a similar right was refused the man whose staunchness had helped so much to avert disaster for Britain and Russia. More than this, over a year passed after the liberation while Greeks suffered and were butchered because of the uncertain policy of the British Government during the previous two years. Still the King was kept away, still the voice of the Greek people was smothered, still the official ear was given to the loudest shouters among the miscellany of Communist empire-builders and revolutionary intelligentsia, and their supporters in Britain and America.

The reasons why this decline occurred, why the pride of a King in his world-acclaimed achievement should be turned to a succession of bitter mortifications, were two-fold. The first was Soviet Russia's determination to bring Greece within her orbit as a Communist vassal State, and

the second the errors made by the British and American Governments in not discerning or facing up to the menace of the situation. These mistakes arose partly through British acceptance of inaccurate and biased political advice, partly from the King's self-contained and uncommunicative character, which tended to deprive him of opportunities for easy and informal expression of his views, and partly from disloyalty to the monarchy and the State shown by some of the Greek statesmen closest to him. For from the moment that King George chose Tsouderos as Prime Minister the door was opened to the old weaknesses of political division and national disruption.

Like Venizelos, Tsouderos is a Cretan. He had been Governor of the Bank of Greece for many years, and was one of the main advocates of the monopolised finance and industry that contributed to the internal economic troubles of the early thirties. Metaxas put an end to these schemes. When Tsouderos was later involved in an attempt to overthrow the dictatorship, he retired to an island in the Aegean, where he remained until after Metaxas's death.

The King invited Tsouderos to form a government, after other Greeks had refused the responsibility, because he was a Cretan and the idea of continued resistance in Crete was then predominant; he was a Venizelist republican, and would thus draw the support of many anti-Metaxas irreconcilables; and he was an able banker who could be expected to handle the country's finances in the abnormal conditions of exile. In opposition to certain of his political colleagues, who wanted to come to terms with the Germans, and who were restrained only by the personal influence of King George, Tsouderos more intelligently appreciated the advantages to the Greek economic identity of carrying on the Government abroad with the King and the British Ally. He therefore accepted the Premiership, successfully shipped Greece's gold reserves to safety, and showed commendable ability and character in various ways, not least in helping to organise Greek military resistance in Crete.

But although Tsouderos openly gave King George his full support, he did not forget that he had a grudge against

Metaxas and indirectly against the King. Even in Crete he removed several followers of Metaxas, and replaced them with his own supporters. When King George and his Government reached the Middle East, and later England, the high prestige of the King rendered him proof against political machinations. But when Tsouderos returned to head the Greek Government in Cairo, it was alleged that he sought to undermine the King's authority, with the object of re-establishing the power of his own party, and with it the support of certain foreign financial interests that had had a voice in Greek affairs since the days of Venizelos. With this aim in view, he, and some of the members of his Government, are accused of having looked with an indulgent eye on any political opposition that offered the possibility of embarrassing the Royalists. Thus it was that they tolerated the systematic infiltration of anti-monarchist elements from Greece into the Greek armed forces in the Middle East. That these elements were swayed by Communist and not merely Republican ambitions was a factor that was ignored, or perhaps not at first realised.

For it was possibly not then understood how strong the Communist military organisation had grown in Greece during the German occupation. It had contrived to rally non-Communists to its banner, under the impulse of patriotic resistance. No longer was it the fugitive force that Metaxas had made of it, powerless to agitate among the workers, and unable to make any impression on the peasant. For the average Greek peasant owns his own land and is strongly individualistic. Before the Asia Minor disaster, efforts to establish a Communist Party in Greece had met with little success, but the intake of 1,500,000 Greeks from Turkey created an insoluble refugee problem that was, for the Communists, exceptionally favourable ground to exploit. This they did so effectively that by 1936 they held the fifteen controlling parliamentary seats. But their influence then was based on political and industrial action. Now, in 1942, it was based on naked force.

When Italy attacked Greece, the first impulse of the Communists was to line up with the other parties in resisting the invader, but a few days later their leader received

other instructions, because Russia was then still allied to Germany, and while this pact lasted, he advocated an agreement with Italy. After the Germans invaded Russia, the Communists sought to monopolise the resistance movement that had sprung up under several leaders. They disguised their Communist identity under the label "National Resistance Front" (E.A.M.) and called their military organisation the "National Popular Army of Liberation" (E.L.A.S.). But E.L.A.S. concentrated its energies not on fighting the Germans, but in eliminating other resistance bands that were not of its own political complexion. Its few activities against the Germans were usually opportunistic acts of savagery that had little or no military value, but that provoked reprisals on helpless villagers.*

There is irrefutable evidence from the majority of the British and American officers who performed liaison duties with the Communist Andartes that serious military action against the occupying troops was seldom taken. Reports to this effect were sent regularly to British Intelligence in Cairo, but apparently failed to reach responsible authority. As a result, for many months the Communist bands were supplied by the British with arms, munitions and funds, which, as was afterwards only too well realised, were not used, but put aside for future action.

As Mr. Churchill said later of the rebel guerillas, in his explanation to the House of Commons of the disaster to which British policy eventually led: "It was not against the Germans they were trying to fight, but to a great extent they were simply taking our arms, lying low, and awaiting the moment when they could seize power and make Greece

* Sixty-five German prisoners were captured in one of the rare ambushes laid by the E.L.A.S. The party was pursued, and, unable to get away with their haul, the E.L.A.S. men butchered every prisoner. The nearest town happened to be the little summer resort of Kalavrita. The Germans marched the men and boys over sixteen, totalling 870, just outside the town, and there mowed them down with machine-guns. Two men survived. The Germans then burnt down every house in the town, including the church. None of the occupants of the place knew anything of the ambush or the murder of prisoners.

a Communist State, with totalitarian liquidation of all opponents."

There were, of course, other resistance groups in the mountains, of which the chief was known as E.D.E.S. (Hellenic National Democratic Organisation). Some of their leaders were monarchists in their outlook, others, such as Zervas, were at first anti-monarchist. But such of these bands as were not broken up or massacred by E.L.A.S. consistently tried to fight the occupying forces, and some of them achieved results in spite of the initial lack of British support.*

Although pretending to resist the Germans, the Communist organisation was frequently on terms of understanding with them. This was proved after the liberation, with the disclosure of formal agreements for specific collaboration between E.A.M. leaders and German officers. One of the most significant, signed on September 1st, 1944, by a representative of the 11th E.L.A.S. Division in Macedonia, was an undertaking not to impede the retreat of the German Army, in exchange for abandoned military equipment, and also, in co-operation with Bulgarian and Albanian Partisans, to fight any "non-popular" bands that might try to interfere with the German forces. That these agreements were observed was shown when the Germans went out of Greece, through territory controlled by an E.L.A.S. army of not less than 70,000 men, without any but trifling engagements. E.L.A.S. certainly attacked the German-instigated Security Battalions, recruited from Greeks, but they did not wish to suffer injury by fighting Germans, because they had another task ahead. They did not even attempt to stop German sabotage operations, as was reported by British and American liaison officers. Nor did they seek to interfere with the massacres carried out by the Bulgarian invaders of Grecian Thrace.

From the beginning of the occupation certain Communist groups were tolerated by the Germans in return for the information they gave about non-Communist resistance or

* At the battle of Preveza the Zervas E.D.E.S. band captured 300 Germans, while at the Menina battle 460 Germans were killed or taken prisoner.

escape activities. More than this, the Germans and Italians, although frequently uncovering plots for escape to Turkey, often shut their eyes to the departure of known Communists. Perhaps they hoped that these men would be of value to German aims if they transferred their activities to the Middle East, and, unhappily, these expectations were fulfilled, for they were to bring deep dishonour upon the Greek armed forces. As soon as they arrived in their units they organised subversive agitation among their fellows, directed ostensibly against the King and the so-called Royalist Government, on the grounds that it was a continuation of the Metaxas dictatorship. As previously indicated, these activities were not only accepted, but discreetly encouraged by certain Greek politicians, in and out of the Government, as being likely to forward the interests of their own parties. They were also supported by Army officers, in exile for their share in the 1934 revolutions, who now sought to replace those who had fought against the Italians and Germans.

The growth of the republican intrigue was helped from an unexpected direction—none other than General Headquarters, Middle East. Among the several sub-sections of the Intelligence Staff engaged in organising guerilla resistance, one which dealt with Greek affairs gained notoriety because of the anti-monarchist sympathies of certain of its officers. Normally the British officer does not allow himself to be influenced by politics during the process of fighting an enemy, but there seems little doubt that some of the otherwise inexplicable actions of this Section were attributable to political bias.

These men, some of whom were in their early twenties, were apparently so occupied by their efforts to damage King George that they forgot the purpose of the war. By some extraordinary feat of spellbinding, they helped to influence responsible British leaders into abandoning the King who had proved his integrity and loyalty to the Allies, in favour of a bunch of unknown toughs whose sole aim in life was to make Greece safe for Communism. Their efforts contributed to the disaster that overtook Greece, and that resulted not only in 120 British soldiers

losing their lives fighting Communists in Athens, but also in the massacre of thousands of innocent Greek hostages.

Their share of the responsibility for these troubles is a byword among knowledgeable Greeks, among whom, even to this day, the mere mention of their military label produces a reaction of anger. In Salonika, in 1947, I talked with Greek officers, who after the German occupation had escaped to Egypt. They still spoke with resentment of the questioning to which they had been subjected. "I fought the Italians and then the Germans, and was wounded twice," declared one man. "After the Germans came, as soon as I could arrange it, I escaped to Turkey. I wanted to carry on the fight, and I left my wife and two children behind. In Smyrna I was questioned about my political background by some Greeks and Levantines in British uniform. I quickly realised they were very left-wing in their views, but I said I was not interested in politics. Then I went on to Egypt, where, after a while, I was questioned by British officers. This time I was asked on which side I had voted in the 1935 plebiscite. I couldn't understand all this, as I'd come to the British to fight, not to argue about politics. And I couldn't understand why the British, who said they were short of men—which was why I had left my family—could spare healthy young officers to ask me questions about my political views."

Those who supported E.A.M. presumably realised later the extent of their errors. It is of course easy to be wise after the event. But there were many who at the time saw the danger of helping Communism, and expressed their doubts. One of these was the King, but on his level he was not free to state too emphatically his suspicions of the long-range planning of our then gallant Ally. Another was Prince Peter, who as long ago as 1941, after a talk with the King, had spoken to the Foreign Office on the possibility of the E.A.M. being taken over by the U.S.S.R. as soon as geographical conditions permitted. He was told, with half-ironical smiles, that "the Russians are now our Allies. Don't you worry, we'll come to an arrangement with them about that, should it happen."



The King and Queen examine a bridge in North Epirus, destroyed by guerillas

King Paul and Queen Frederica visit Arta in Epirus





The King completes an inspection of a Royal Hellenic Air Force Unit

The King discusses their problems with men of the village of Metsovo



The sabotage intelligence organisation for Greece, as indeed for most of Europe, grew out of groups of men, employees of one of the big British petrol concerns, who, with the support of powerful business interests in the City of London, were sent to destroy German-held oil and other installations in Greece, Roumania and elsewhere. These saboteurs had immense financial backing, and were given Governmental military and political facilities, but they were not guided by any long-term political policy, and so in their first attempts to organise sabotage and resistance they used the only ready-made machinery to hand—the disciplined underground organisation of the Communists.

The Government thus found itself committed to a dubious and dangerous line of co-operation, which it eventually decided to accept and sponsor. When Military Intelligence took over civilian sabotage responsibilities, it was usually found easier to get quick results from the organised Communists than from other, independent resistance groups. In Greece this course was followed with great deliberation, and it is no exaggeration to say that British Intelligence built up the Communist army there. This situation led to marked contradictions in British policy, for outwardly the King, with his fine record, was at first supported firmly by the Allied Governments, while in secret his most deadly enemies were being armed, unified and given the prestige of official Allied recognition.

The British escape organisation, which must have known that after mid-1943 E.A.M. checked and controlled the flow of escapees from Greece, apparently raised no obstacles against the systematic infiltration of Communist propagandists and organisers into the Greek armed forces. There can be little doubt that some part of the British Intelligence Organisation was well aware of this subversion of Greek troops under British Military Command, but as no military steps were taken to weed out the trouble-makers, it can be assumed that the gravity of the situation was never explained to high authority. The officials responsible for this situation were presumably not surprised, therefore, when in April, 1943, the efforts of the Communist and Republican agitators produced a mutiny

against the "Monarcho-Fascist" Government. Tsouderos's solution was to remove certain of his supporters, such as M. Kanellopoulos, and replace them with republican politicians nominated by the mutineers. Officers who had re-entered the Army from exile, some of them as a result of trouble provoked in 1942, and who had directly or indirectly supported the mutiny, were advanced in rank. Thus was the first step on the downward slope to disruption successfully negotiated.

King George was then in England. During the past months he had received from his brother Paul, and also from Prince Peter, warnings about the attacks on the monarchy. But not wishing to embarrass British military leaders in Cairo, nor to resist the advice offered him to remain in England, he had put off the day of interference. As soon as the news of the mutiny came to London, he flew to Cairo, in spite of admonitions that his life might be in danger. His hope to resolve the differences so grievously unveiled was quickly frustrated, and he realised that in going to Cairo he had merely exposed himself to close-range attacks by the various groups working for a republic in Greece.

It was not long before these attacks were taken up elsewhere, for in the general build-up of hostility against King George the anti-monarchists were immensely helped by an uncommon unanimity on the part of the Press. In England, in September, 1943, a leading weekly discovered that the King had supported the Metaxas dictatorship, and its charges were continued in the newspaper which in April, 1941, had written: "He has been flawless in honour and courage". Other papers followed suit, but did not say why they had ignored King George's alleged misdeeds when acclaiming his leadership in 1940. In Cairo the majority of British and American newspaper men seized the anti-monarchist idea with enthusiasm, for they could now indulge in hyperbole without falling foul of Military Security. And monarchism was always a safe subject to impugn, especially in America. "So progressive was the Cairo press-room generally, and not only the American benches, that anything but the damning of monarchical

institutions was shuddered at, almost as a pathological perversion." *

Thus were born a series of misleading slogans about the Greek political situation which were accepted unquestioningly in Britain and America by those who liked their ideas presented to them ready-made in terse phrases. "Anti-fascist elements in Greece's Middle East Army refused to fight under George II, mistrusting his fascist record," was a typical American summary of the situation. During this period many of the Press representatives of Britain and America played a role of which they have now little reason to be proud, but their irresponsibility was to be easily out-matched by later efforts during the Athens battles which their attitude in Cairo helped to bring about.

In both Britain and the U.S.A. Communist supporters welcomed the story of King George's suddenly discovered wickedness, and gladly aired their views on a subject about which the newspapers kept them so consistently ill-informed. No doubt to its own surprise E.A.M. found friends in many unexpected places, and learned some interesting news about its own good intentions. Quite in line with the irony of the situation, as it can now be seen, was the action of a Governmental department in allocating newsprint to a Greek Communist newspaper in London, which regularly printed articles urging Greek troops under British Military Command in the Middle East, including some in the Tobruk garrison, to mutiny and support the rebellion against the King.

To King George the turn of public opinion against him was something that at first he could not understand. With justifiable irony, he recalled the triumphs of his reception in Britain and America in 1941 and 1942. Nothing had since changed in the circumstances under which he had won that approval, nor had he himself changed in his attitude towards his responsibilities. But he realised that no one can stand still in this world, for everything must move either forwards or backwards. Whilst he had rested on his laurels in London—if such a term can be applied to his

* *Simiomata*, by Richard Capell, Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, p. 63.

efforts to build up a sound government outside Greece on the lines taken by other exiled monarchs and their ministers—vigorous, unscrupulous forces had been at work to injure him. And these agencies, so separate in their origins and motives, were strangely banded together, as though in a conspiracy.

The Communist plot he was now well informed upon, but nobody would listen to his warnings, for the fable that the E.L.A.S. men were "simple mountain patriots" had become too well established by the sentiment-searching pressmen. That the E.A.M. leaders did not speak for any but their own political minority he was quite certain; but no responsible British official knew Greece well enough to assess the value of this view. The antagonism of the Press he endured with outward equanimity, although inwardly he was hurt by its injustice, but he appreciated the dangers of Press misrepresentation, for he had witnessed the results of a similar campaign against his father. Yet he could not himself explain to Pressmen why they should be more objective. His every possible course of action was stultified by the knowledge that some of his Ministers were members of the Republican League that aimed to displace him. He could not trust them to uphold the Crown, and he had no resort against them, for reigning Kings may not argue their case to the public by radio broadcasts or press conferences.

The only right course open to the King was to dismiss Tsouderos, and because of his failure to do so, he shares the responsibility for the events that followed the 1943 mutiny. But remembering the dire results of his father's dismissal of Venizelos on an issue that split the country, the King must have thought so strong a remedy might well prove worse than the disease. There was no Liberal statesman of equivalent standing ready to replace Tsouderos, and a Royalist nomination would have given fresh argument to his opponents. He adopted a policy of patient dignity towards the Republican League's manœuvrings, hoping no doubt that matters would straighten themselves out in the course of time. Meanwhile he had to endure as a personal burden the direct and indirect assaults against the monarchy.

One of the happenings that most affected King George during this period was the treatment meted out by the British authorities to certain officers who remained loyal during the mutiny. These men refused to continue serving in their units when the mutineer leaders, who had subjected them to many indignities, were pardoned and some of them placed in command of the units they had caused to mutiny. The loyal officers were treated by the British as if they had been the mutineers. A hundred and twenty of them were packed off to internment, more correctly described as imprisonment, in the Sudan. The mutineers remained in possession, with a greatly enhanced reputation, ready to prepare brazenly for the next mutiny.

Colonel Levidis told me years later that, although King George was sometimes inclined to irritation, he very rarely lost control of his temper. In all the years Levidis was with the King, he saw him in a furious rage on only two occasions. One was when these officers were banished to the Sudan. The other occasion, in London, will be described in the next chapter.

The leniency extended to the mutineers was not understood by Greeks not of the Communist persuasion. That most of the rank and file had been misled by agitators tolerated by the Greek and British Governments did perhaps excuse them, but surely, it was contended, the leaders should have been removed from their posts and confined until the end of the war. Even if there had been strong justification for discontent, a mutiny was a mutiny, especially during the war, within range of the enemy. Yet high British military authorities, far from resisting political pressure from London, adopted a lenient view of the guilt of the offenders. When Prince Peter protested to a high-ranking Army officer in Syria at the folly of such weakness, he received the reply, "It is the only way we can maintain peace and order. Communism? Why, it hasn't even succeeded in Russia."

Greek officers wondered what would have happened to British officers and men had they mutinied in war-time. Under peace conditions, British soldiers have been known to mutiny because their food is bad, and not be severely

punished. But if they were to mutiny for some political reason, such as resentment at the politics or parentage of their War Minister, they would receive short shrift, whether in peace or war, even if they claimed that they spoke for the whole British nation. But when the Greek anti-tank regiment in Syria mutinied three times on an excuse of disliking the War Minister in Cairo, and declared that theirs was the voice of the whole nation, British military authorities just shrugged their shoulders.

In a Proclamation on July 4th, 1943, the King, in order to help stabilise the political situation, had stated that general elections for a Constituent Assembly would be held within six months of the liberation of Greece, and that the Constitution of 1911 would be in force until the Greek nation expressed its sovereign will. This meant that in due course the King would return to Greece with his Government and Army. But this procedure did not satisfy the E.A.M., who realised that if the King were to return to Greece with his Army, his prestige would quickly steady the country and defeat the Communist plan to gain control. They all worked, therefore, firstly to prevent the King's return, and secondly to complete the disintegration of the Greek armed forces. The British authorities enterprisingly gave every assistance in furthering these objects. They brought to Cairo by secret channels five E.A.M. and Communist representatives, who demanded that the King should not return before a plebiscite was held. The King firmly refused to join in such an unconstitutional discussion, which was closed on the advice of Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt.

But in October, Mr. Eden, passing through Cairo on his way to Moscow, proposed to Tsouderos that the King should "abide by the wish of the nation manifest in every direction" that he should not return to Greece before a plebiscite on the issue of the continuation of the monarchy, and that meanwhile the Archbishop of Athens should be appointed as Regent. Such action, taken without reference to the King, did not encourage his co-operation in what he considered an interference in Greek affairs. But because he realised that Mr. Churchill had acted on the

mistaken information that Greek public opinion was entirely behind the E.A.M., and because his own position was growing increasingly difficult through the untrustworthiness of many of his Ministers, he consented to address a letter to his Cabinet in which he agreed to arrange the date of his return according to conditions at the time of liberation. His letter was amended during translation into English in a Greek Government office. The King had written, "I shall examine the question of the day of my return", but was quoted as declaring, "I shall examine the question of my return". This crafty trick gave the impression throughout the world that the King was already considering abdication, and this apparent weakness was seized on as an opening to increase the pressure on him.

Soon afterwards Mr. Eden presented himself to the King, but this time with a draft proclamation, in which the King was to announce that he would not return to Greece after the liberation, but would appoint a Regent, and remain abroad until the Greek people had made their decision. The King again declined to accept what he regarded as an interference with his constitutional rights. Like his father, he could take his stand on a question of principle, and not be shaken by the suggestion of unpleasant consequences that might follow a too uncompromising attitude.

Meanwhile, in the effort to sort out the political complications of the Greek tangle, conferences were arranged in Cairo, to which leaders of the resistance bands were called from Greece. The Communist leaders were brought to Egypt with official British help, but the heads of non-Communist resistance bands had to make their way by whatever dangerous underground channels they could devise. The results of the meeting served only to emphasise the growing breach between the British authorities and King George with his close supporters, for while on the one hand the King refused to treat with leaders who were not truly representative of his people, on the other the British, influenced doubtless by the views of the Republican League, refused to consider the possibility that the E.A.M.

leaders were not representative Greek patriots, but tools of the Communist Party.

King George's position in facing what was to him an incomprehensible attitude on the part of his British friends was again made very difficult by the treacheries still being planned, regardless of the risk to the State, by certain groups in his Government. After the 1943 mutiny, which led to a new Government, still under M. Tsouderos, three of the new Ministers, members of the Republican League but hostile to the Premier, decided to get rid of him, and for most of the following year schemed to use the E.A.M. organisation in the armed forces to compel his resignation. But the Premier was playing a similar game, and he expected to win this battle of wits, for, in his previous effort to weaken the pro-monarchist influence, he was already experienced in handling such delicate matters. The E.A.M. grasped the situation, and decided to play off each group against the other and draw the profit to themselves.

The three Ministers staged a plan, in which their E.A.M. associates were to call for Tsouderos's resignation, the King's abdication, and the formation of a government acceptable to the "Mountain Patriots" and headed by the three Ministers and their friends. Up to a point the E.A.M. did as they were told. The Army and the Air Force mutinied in both the Middle East and Rhodesia, and then came the turn of the Navy. Here an admiral, a member of the League, had been instructed by the Minister concerned to read a proclamation to the ships' crews that he was sending a delegation to Cairo to see Tsouderos and demand his resignation. This astonishing instruction was actually obeyed, for on his written order a delegation of four officers, one of them with a fine war record, went to Cairo and rough-handed Tsouderos into resigning.

The ministerial plotters congratulated themselves on the success of their *coup*, and one of them immediately took Tsouderos' place as Premier. But they had not reckoned with their E.A.M. friends, who, as soon as they were sure that action had been taken to remove Tsouderos, seized control of the ships of the Navy. The Admiral got away by the skin of his teeth, but he was shaken and trembling

even after he had arrived in Cairo. The rest of the officers were forced down to ships' holds and put in chains. Forty-three vessels, from warships to merchantmen, floated in open rebellion in Alexandria harbour. Before the mutiny was subjugated it achieved several useful aids to the enemy. Greek ships failed an important convoy, and the 1st Greek Brigade at Burg-el-Arab mutinied on the eve of its embarkation to join the 8th Army in Italy. The *Ajax* was brought at top speed from Italy to quell the naval insurrection. Thousands of British troops were needed to deal with the mutineers, some 10,000 of whom were put into confinement. The new Premier resigned when he realised that the mutiny had got beyond his control.

Having now permitted the virtual neutralisation of the one possible stabilising element in the whole imbroglio—namely, the traditional loyalty of the Greek Services to the Crown—the British Government tried to placate E.A.M. by bringing out from Greece a well-meaning liberal, Papandreou, to head a government that, with six representatives of E.A.M., should have been sufficiently Communist to satisfy most of the would-be king-breakers in Cairo and London. But, on the contrary, this submission only confirmed them in their animosity. As the time for the liberation of Greece drew near, so the storm around the King's head grew wilder.

It may well be asked why the King, now so well aware of his personal unpopularity with certain Greek, British and American elements, supported by British officialdom, did not in utter disgust quietly abdicate in favour of his brother Paul. The reason was that he knew with a certainty he could not explain that the outcry against him did not arise from the great mass of the 7,000,000 Greeks, impotent and inarticulate in the hands of the invader. He refused to accept the noisy threats of a few thousand Communists and their mutineer dupes as representing the feelings of his people. He refused to give way, because he knew that to do so would be taken by that imprisoned, suffering people to mean that he had abandoned them. He stood like a rock before even the impatient words of those great British statesmen who had previously sustained him.

He endured calumny, insult and treachery because of his sense of duty to the mass of the Greek people, the peasants and villagers and shopkeepers and workers and ordinary everyday Greeks, who, in his heart, he was sure still needed him.

From now on there followed a period of confused British policy that was a strange and even ominous repetition of the Entente action in 1914-17 in upholding the "rival" Government at Salonika. In November, 1943, Mr. Churchill had stated categorically in the House of Commons, "It is the settled policy of His Majesty's Government to support the King of the Hellenes, who is at once our loyal ally and the constitutional head of the Greek State". In 1944, although British Governmental statements were officially addressed to the King and legal Government, the British authorities in Cairo systematically favoured the activities of the "rival" Greek elements, and at the same time acted towards the legal Government in ways that weakened its authority. This manner of supporting "peoples instead of Governments" was to lead to revolution, and to the desperate situation in Athens that was saved at the last minute only by a complete reversal of policy.

Yet the second mutiny had at least compelled the British to examine where their plans were leading them. At last the "none so deaf as those who won't hear" party in General Headquarters was shaken into paying attention to the anti-E.A.M. reports which liaison officers in Greece had sent since the summer of 1943. Supplies of arms and money were switched from the Communist bands to the guerillas led by Zervas, who used them as effectively as his limited area of operations allowed. King George, who had flown to England in March, in order to be once more near the seat of power, had returned to Cairo when the second mutiny broke out. He asked now to be allowed to move to Greece to lead and encourage the non-Communist resisters, but was not allowed to go even to Corfu.

Meanwhile, in Cairo other straws showed the direction of the wind. The Communist members of Papandreou's E.A.M. Ministry were discovered to be reporting for

instructions to the Russian Legation. Realising that control of the interior of Greece, as of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Roumania, was passing into potentially dangerous hands, Mr. Churchill, with his phenomenal strategic insight, pressed for a Balkan landing before the one in Normandy, but, as is now known, President Roosevelt was all against this proposal. He was supported by Stalin, no doubt with some secret amusement. But Churchill persisted in an all-British effort to open a gate to the Balkans by attempting a landing in the Dodecanese and Aegean Islands. This effort failed because some of the forces detailed to take part had to be diverted to Italy, where the Americans were in difficulties.

Eventually came zero hour for the first British landings in Greece. In the Middle East, King George had waited for this day, hoping and expecting to the last to be allowed to go back to his country. Colonel Levidis told me that of all the miserable days in the King's life—and he had had many—the worst was when he watched everybody, bar his brother and others of the Royal Family, preparing to return to the Greece on whose well-being the whole of his life centred. For so positively had the British Government aligned itself with the anti-monarchists that not one of the family was permitted to return to the country in which two people out of three hopefully awaited their return.

Instead of going across the Mediterranean to join the British and Greek forces of invasion, the King climbed disconsolately into an aeroplane and flew to England. Months later, when the Labour Party came to power, and Greek affairs were in new hands, the King was asked by a high and popular Minister what he was doing in London when his country was in such difficult straits. He was, indeed, practically accused of shirking his responsibilities. "Why didn't you go back to Greece with your Government?" he was asked. This was one of the occasions when King George found that his command of the English language was not quite good enough.

CHAPTER XII

FORCES OF DISRUPTION

WHEN British liberation forces entered Greece at the end of September, 1944, German troops had already started the movement of withdrawal necessitated by the precarious position in which they were placed by King Michael's *coup d'état* in Roumania. British troops entered Athens without trouble, and were rapturously received. Formations started at once to move northwards after the retreating enemy. On October 17th Papandreou and his all-party Government arrived in Athens, and were also afforded a warm welcome. By October 30th the Germans had gone from Greece.

On the surface the situation appeared full of promise. The period of resistance was over, the period of liberation was in being, and for the future there now seemed possible a period of peace. The Government was in formal and friendly relations with the Allied Powers, and the manner of its coming, as the first stage of the country's re-establishment, had the full and understanding approval of the United States Government. In Athens excitement over the liberation continued, but some observers sensed that part of the celebrations, the organised processions, the thousands of new flags and banners conjured mysteriously from a destitute population, were primarily demonstrations of self-advertisement by the extreme left-wing and Communist organisations. For, as we now realise, to these elements of the population the day of liberation was the stepping-stone, not to freedom, but to a renewed enslavement.

As previously indicated, the original resistance movements that flared up spontaneously among all sections of the community a few months after the German invasion, assembled eventually into two main groups. Into the apparently innocuous and patriotic E.A.M. were attracted

left-wing resisters and doctrinaire idealists, as well as others hoping for personal profit or advancement. There was also a strong hooligan element. The other group—E.D.E.S.—contained men of all political creeds who could not stomach the idea of fighting for the Communists. They were invariably labelled Fascists and collaborators by E.A.M., and were regarded by Pressmen as belonging to the extreme right, even though, as Premier Papandreou declared later, the extreme right wing had ceased to exist.

Among the non-Communist tools of the E.A.M. Communist Committee were many who took part in minor sabotage and intelligence work against occupying forces, especially in Athens. Outside the capital, however, E.L.A.S. organisation showed that its only object was to establish forcible control over the whole population. Opposition was punished by fines, beatings, imprisonment, death. As far back as March, 1944, E.A.M. set up its own provisional government, which frankly looked on E.L.A.S. as its own "National" Army. By the mutinies E.A.M. had already destroyed the legal Government's armed forces, and by their manœuvrings had succeeded in keeping away from the country the one institution—the monarchy—that might have rallied the nation against Communist rule.

As Mr. Churchill stated afterwards in America, "The King of the Hellenes and his brother naturally wished to return at the head of this small expedition" (i.e. the British liberation force). "However, the British policy, long declared, had been to seek a plebiscite on the monarchist issue, and the King deferred to our wishes and awaited in London the decision of the Greek Nation." Unfortunately, before the Greek nation could be consulted, the tragedy for which the stage was set had to be played to its unhappy climax. Once more in her brief modern story Greece was to be made to suffer for the sinister plottings of her enemies and the unhappy blunderings of her friends.

The country had already paid a terrible price for the loyalty which her King and people had shown to Britain in 1941. For nearly four years she had suffered under pitiless Nazi terrorism, abetted by the savage excesses of the Bulgars. Her injuries had been stupendous for a popu-

lation of seven million souls. Deaths caused by war were large—25,000 members of the armed forces and 3,500 crews of the merchant marine were killed in action, as well as 7,000 civilians by enemy and Allied bombings—but these formed only a part of her losses. Fifty thousand people were killed in guerilla warfare, 30,000 executed by the Germans or Italians, and 40,000 massacred by the Bulgarian invaders of Thrace. About 100,000 deported Greeks died in Germany and Poland, and an estimated figure of over a quarter of a million deaths occurred in Greece from starvation and other hardships of the occupation.

This grim total of over half a million deaths was only one facet of the Greek disaster. Twenty of her cities had been devastated or heavily damaged, and some 300 villages razed to the ground. One house in every eight in the whole country had been destroyed. Seventy-eight per cent of her shipping had been sunk. Her rail communications had been paralysed by the destruction of all her railway bridges and 95 per cent of all her engines and rolling-stock. Three-quarters of her road bridges were down, and three-quarters of her road transport looted or destroyed. And deliberate inflation of the currency had melted away all savings and capital, and brought financial ruin to thousands.

The country was disorganised, insolvent, starving, waiting anxiously for U.N.R.R.A. relief, and pleading for a period of peace. The problems facing the Papandreou Government were grave enough even had their task been only to heal the wounds of the past four years. But now E.A.M., having failed to gain full control of the country by pseudo-constitutional treacheries, was preparing for open force. Papandreou's task was to fend off the risk to the State presented by the existence of a private army of 100,000 men, poised to seize power while the country lay defenceless.

His Government was weakened by the six E.A.M. Ministers, who played their quisling part by urging conciliation and moderation against the rebel forces which they knew were already concentrating on Athens, and for whom they had obtained advantages and concessions that the Greek nation was soon to pay for in blood and agony. While British troops moved northwards from Athens to

pursue the retreating German invader they passed unfriendly parties of E.L.A.S. Andartes on their way to the capital. Systematically these guerillas began to penetrate the Athens suburbs, taking possession of strategically sited buildings, and getting to work with their own secret police—O.P.L.A.—to mark down those whose elimination had been decided on for political or personal reasons.

Signs of trouble became more open when, on November 7th, Papandreou announced the proposal to disarm all the guerilla bands, E.D.E.S. as well as E.L.A.S. In discussions which all knew to be futile, E.A.M. required first the disbandment of the Greek Mountain Brigade and Sacred Squadrons, because of their alleged Royalist sympathies. In fact, more than half the members of these formations, which had a magnificent record of fighting from North Africa to Italy, consisted of republicans. The leader of the Sacred Squadron, so far from being a Royalist, had in 1935 fled to the French Foreign Legion to escape the consequences of his share in an anti-monarchist plot. The Government naturally refused to give way to E.A.M.'s demand.

From all directions Andartes were marching on the capital, and as their strength increased, so E.L.A.S. more openly extended and reinforced their positions. They were watched by British troops, but could not be turned back, as they were, legally, authorised guerilla units. But on December 1st, when the E.L.A.S. Civil Guards should have handed over to formations of the new Greek Army—men conscripted under the normal procedure—they scornfully refused.

E.A.M. now threw down the gauntlet. A general strike was ordered for the 4th, at a time when relief ships at Piraeus were unloading the food and other supplies of which the whole country was in desperate need. The Andartes began to act. Police stations in Athens and the surrounding districts were attacked, their occupants murdered. Middle-of-the-night seizures were made by O.P.L.A. Late on December 1st the Communist Ministers of the Government slipped out of the beleaguered city centre and joined the rebels—an action that showed the moment had arrived for the final blow.

The E.A.M. announced a great demonstration in Constitution Square on Sunday, December 3rd. That morning the official Communist newspaper printed an inflammatory article by one of the Communist Ministers who declared, "The day has come for our powder-blackened guns to speak". The Government feared that the demonstration was meant to cover the outbreak of the rising, and forbade it. Defying this order, E.A.M. assembled the demonstrators and sent them to Constitution Square. As the head of the procession reached the gendarmerie station at the corner of the Square, the police, by some fatal precipitance, opened fire, and killed seven of the demonstrators, including women and children. This incident, although tragic and criminally unnecessary, was still but an incident compared with the thousands of murders and massacres by which it was preceded and followed. But it evoked a world-wide reaction of indignation, with the usual accusations of Fascism and repression of the proletariat. This was because many newspapermen happened to be on the spot, and as some of them had not previously touched death so closely, they lost all sense of proportion in their reports. "War correspondents, many of whom had never seen blood before or heard a shot fired in anger . . . some of them grasped the opportunity of being able to announce that the war had not passed them by." *

The result was that the British and American publics, lacking any other scapegoat, placed responsibility for what had happened on the so-called reactionary, monarchist Government of Democratic-Socialists and Liberals. The foreign publics were not informed that the police were jumpy because they had been warned that the demonstration would probably be the signal for revolution, nor that during the past fortnight seventy of their number had been murdered and 100 seriously wounded, nor that Papandreou swore that the police had not fired the first shot. Nor was the world told that in the evening E.L.A.S. took full advantage of the opportunity to kill off as many political opponents and gendarmes as they could lay their hands on.

For the next few days E.L.A.S., gratified with an accident

* *Simiomata*, by Richard Capell.



Queen Frederica distributes parcels to troops wounded in the 1947 frontier fighting.

The Queen makes friends with a shy little Greek.





The King and Queen among labour volunteers of St George Centre The Queen takes part in a folk-dance.



that had done more to win world sympathy than all their propaganda, pressed on with the work of consolidating their positions in Athens and systematically killing those they disliked. Many of these things were done almost in the view of British troops, but they were not at first attacked, because E.A.M. hoped the British, in deference to Russian influence and American opinion, would remain neutral in this civil war. In this attitude they were encouraged by their friends in Britain and America, including the newspapers. It was a strange commentary on the mass fallibility of the Press that in Britain there should be staid organs of constitutionalism, as well as those of the Extreme Left, persistently sustaining Communist revolutionaries, not in ignorance of the facts, but in refusal to acknowledge them. "I complain and protest," cried Papandreou, "against the reporting of the events of those days in a large part of the Allied Press, and not only American but British."

In Athens, juggling with the military situation with unexampled patience, was General Scobie. Although rebellion was obviously now in full swing, his instructions did not permit him to interfere in what London had apparently decided to regard as an ordinary Greek political squabble. British troops were now attacked freely, but were not allowed to reply with an offensive. Meanwhile conferences took place and messages passed between Scobie and Sarafis, the renegade Army officer leading the rebels, who was trying to induce the British Commander to tolerate complete seizure of the capital. In these efforts Sarafis and his E.A.M. masters, the political commissars, were greatly helped and strengthened by the attitude of the British Press. E.L.A.S. morale was stiffened by loud-speaker propaganda which blared through the streets the news that the London *Times* supported them, and that the British Opposition officially disagreed with their Government's policy in Greece.

British troops were to pay with their lives * for these

* British casualties in the Greek revolution :—

27 officers and 93 other ranks killed.

202 officers and 988 other ranks wounded.

16 other ranks missing.

encouragements of what all ranks now regarded as a gang of ruthless, murderous bandits and hooligans, yet within an ace of forcing submission by starvation. But fortunately the leader in whom they trusted at home, in spite of his Government's previous support of these forces that menaced not merely Athens but British security throughout the Middle East, suddenly resolved to avert complete disaster. Scobie was authorised to secure his line of communication. British troops drove the Andartes from their commanding positions, and opened the road to the Piraeus from which came their supplies.

Loud outcries in Britain and America followed this belated effort at self-defence. "Repression of the left"; "Support of the Monarcho-Fascist reactionaries"; "Let them cut their own throats, but let us keep out of it" were typical Press comments. The newspapers did not give the statement of Venizelos's successor, Themistoklis Sophoulis, aged leader of the Liberal Party, "The Greek State is engaged in a struggle for self-preservation. Non-intervention by the British would have been the disregard of elementary moral obligations." His views did not count for much with the Press, for he was old enough to believe in upholding the Greek Constitution.

Since the shooting of the demonstrators, Papandreou had wilted noticeably under his burden of responsibility, made doubly heavy by what must have appeared as the world's crazy misconception of the situation. A Liberal with a long record of anti-monarchism, for which he had suffered by imprisonment and exile, he had heard the mob calling for his death as a Fascist-Monarchist, merely because he had acted according to what he considered to be the best interests of Greece. He had no King to consult or lean upon. Worn out, he was not sorry when the British Government decided that another leader was desirable. They called from his long exile in France ex-dictator General Plastiras, leader of the military revolt after the Smyrna debacle.

It seemed almost as though, after careful deliberation, the British had chosen the one man whose appointment as Premier would offer the greatest affront to the King, the

Royal Family, and indeed all those of monarchist inclination in and out of Greece. For, more than any other man, it was Plastiras who had forced from the throne first King Constantine, and then King George, who had been mainly responsible for the execution of the six Ministers, and who had tried his best also to have Prince Andrew shot. But Plastiras claimed to be a selfless patriot. The Press assumed jubilantly that he had come to replace Papandreou because he would be more ready to compromise with E.A.M., but he soon disabused them. "A small miscreant gang of anarchist elements had a long time since launched on the nation a cruel civil war, after having misled a number of Greek patriots, either by fraud or by force," was his announcement of a stiffer attitude towards the Communist controllers of E.A.M.

But no immediate result appeared from this protestation. The Andartes still sniped from behind chimney-stacks, O.P.L.A. still seized their victims, British troops still defended themselves, if still alive after being attacked. Christmas Day came, and with it an unexpected arrival, whose presence cheered the whole population, Greek and British, of the island in the middle of Athens that represented almost all that was left of the Greek State and Constitution. The visitor was Mr. Churchill, accompanied by Mr. Eden. The two Ministers came at risk to their lives, and the Premier escaped snipers and other dangers with his customary cheerfulness. He presided at a conference with the E.A.M. leaders, and had the patience to repeat most of his speech because they arrived late.

The question was raised of a Regency to answer for the King, whose presence in Greece at this juncture, the rebels said, would add fuel to the fire. That it might have helped to put the fire out was never considered. Mr. Churchill saw that the question of a Regency was one for the Greeks to decide. The E.A.M. representatives welcomed this contentious issue, firstly as a means of weakening the influence of the monarchy, and secondly in order to evade acceptance of the Government's demand that the first step must be a general disarmament of all guerilla bands. The E.A.M. representatives contemptuously rejected this pro-

posal and presented counter-demands that would have resulted in a complete surrender of the Government's constitutional powers. The Papandreou Government had crawled on its knees in order to try to arrive at a settlement—a typical concession was an offer not to commission any officer in the new army until he had been approved by E.A.M.—but there were limits beyond which any Government still retaining a few dregs of self-respect could not go, and so the meetings ended in breakdown.

The E.L.A.S. murdering continued. Angry young Athenians who asked the British for arms to resist the E.L.A.S. bands were impatiently restrained. More British troops were killed by snipers. The others read in British newspapers that they were Fascists fighting to impose a hated monarchy on a country whose real safeguard was the band of self-sacrificing democrats now engaged in looting Athens and murdering its people.

But the question of the Regency had taken on a prime importance, for E.A.M. had accepted the proposals, and it offered at least a hope for a settlement by agreement. That the agreement would have to be between constitutional authority and revolutionary force, or that the revolutionary leaders, having seized control of most of Greece except the centre of Athens, would agree to anything less than complete submission by the State, did not seem to worry anybody. Indeed, leading British journals said the struggle was merely one between Left and Right, and somehow or other they must be made to shake hands and behave.

Mr. Churchill went home, his mind made up. The turn of events in Greek affairs since 1941 had laid him open to criticism in Parliament and in America. That King George had been linked with Metaxas had become a crime, outweighing the service the two men had rendered to the Allied cause. It was too late now to regret that the situation had come about mainly because Britain had armed E.L.A.S., surrendered to E.A.M. and their friends in Westminster, and drifted into regarding the King and his known supporters as reactionaries. The clever propaganda of the Greek Communists, disguised as democrats, the blind

support of left-wing elements in Cairo, Britain and America, the unbridled partisanship of the Press, the opportunistic thrusts of political opponents in Parliament—all these impelled the Prime Minister to decide that the King must now give way on the question of appointing a Regent.

Whether Mr. Churchill appreciated King George's point of view is not known, but this was not a factor that received much consideration from any quarter. It was, indeed, an anomaly that in tolerant Britain nobody seemed to recognise that King George might have reasonable justification for his disagreement with British policy, or that his attitude to the Greek situation might be based on his sense of duty to his country and his people. He bore the attacks on his person usually with equanimity, but reacted firmly against those directed against the security of Greece. He felt that the way in which he and his loyal supporters had been sacrificed to the vociferous pro-Communist elements in Greece, Britain and America was symptomatic of a surrender of Greek interests as part of the price of Russia's goodwill. He felt that he was the custodian of the well-being of those of his people whose views were not broadcast throughout the world, as were those of the Russian-aided E.A.M. Experience had taught him to mistrust British officialdom, and not only for its mutability. Neither did he forget that British officials had armed and encouraged a Communist minority in Greece, and had refused aid to Royalist bands until it was too late, or that they had apparently connived at the demoralisation of the Greek forces in the Middle East, and so brought the stain of dishonour on Greek arms. Neither did he forget that British officials had sponsored defiances of the Greek Constitution by a non-elected and non-representative minority of Communists, and that he, the King, had been rebuffed by Britain for declining to discuss personally with these men their challenges to his position as the constitutional head of the State.

Most bitterly of all, perhaps, he remembered that he had not been allowed to go to Greece, in spite of the assurances he had given that the people should decide their future, and the future of the monarchy, in free elections. He had not

been allowed to return with his Government because the E.A.M. had demanded that he be kept away until after a plebiscite which they intended should never take place. Suppressing his outraged pride and resentment at the British so readily accepting this attack against the throne, the King had eventually agreed to await a plebiscite. As Mr. Eden tactfully stated in the House of Commons (20.12.44), "It was on the advice of the Prime Minister and myself, given personally, that the King is still in this country". As usual, King George maintained a scrupulously correct attitude and refrained from making public statements.

But now he was being pressed to appoint a Regent. He knew that for a Regent to be named without his authority would be an illegal, indeed a revolutionary, act, and he had determined to stand firmly against this last surrender of his kingly prerogative to minority clamour. For on the question of a Regent, to whom he must delegate the Royal powers that were the State's constitutional safeguard against unwise and hasty action and legislation, his sense of duty to his country and to himself saw only one answer. He would not risk resigning his responsibility into the hands of an individual who might, unwittingly, be drawn under the influence of a minority pledged to the dominance of a foreign Power. This was the King's attitude, and it was one which nobody in England appeared to understand or to respect. He was regarded merely as an obstructionist.

The Prime Minister decided to act. At ten o'clock on the evening of the 29th King George was asked to go to No. 10 Downing Street. The scene was described to me by people close to the King. He was received by Mr. Churchill and Mr. Eden, and told that the situation demanded that Damaskinos should be made Regent. An argument opened that continued for nearly four hours. At first the King resisted all the reasons presented to him. Tempers began to rise. Mr. Churchill, wearing his famous siren-suit, began to lose his patience. He stiffened his attitude, and the discussion became more and more heated. Finally, at two o'clock, King George was given twenty minutes to agree to the appointment of the Archbishop.

The alternative was that Damaskinos would be appointed without the Royal assent, and King George himself would be regarded by the British Government as merely a foreign visitor with no official standing.

White with anger, King George returned to his suite at Claridges. To him this ultimatum struck deep at the independence of the Greek State. This was the occasion—the second only in twenty-five years—when Colonel Levidis again saw the King so deeply incensed. But under such pressure he had no course but to submit, for to have abdicated would not have solved the problem and would have meant abandoning those in Greece who trusted in him. He returned to Downing Street at 2.30 and informed Mr. Churchill of his decision. In a telegram to Athens on December 30th he appointed the Archbishop as Regent of Greece during the period of emergency, at the same time repeating his former declaration that he was “resolved not to return to Greece unless summoned by a free and fair expression of the national will”.

Archbishop Damaskinos assumed office at once, and called on Plastiras to form a new Government. British forces in Athens had been reinforced by air by troops withdrawn from the battle in Italy, for the British Government had at last come to the decision that it must save Greece from the insurgents. General Scobie was authorised to take firm action to drive them out of Athens. The Royal Air Force blew them out of their strongpoints with rockets, and tanks and infantry drove them from house to house, clear of the city.

E.A.M. realised that the attempted *coup* had failed, for they had never expected that the British would, in face of the Russian and American attitude, use force against them. On the principle of keeping their arms to fight again another day, E.L.A.S. withdrew from the Athens area, taking with them thousands of British and Greek hostages, including the bulk of the R.A.F. Headquarters captured at Kyfissia. Even though the retreat was already under way, there was no pursuit, and no attempt to rescue the hostages. Instead, efforts continued for a truce, for it was not desired to “embitter” the rebels by pressing home their defeat.

Thus while a thousand British hostages and many thousands of Greeks were forced to march under distressing mid-winter conditions to mountain hideouts, or were being shot for falling by the wayside (one of these was a retired British naval officer, Commander Tribe, aged seventy, whose body was afterwards found on Mount Hymettos), parleys went on for thirty-two hours between the British Commander and the rebel leaders. Then, hastily, under political pressure from London, a truce was signed, which allowed the rebels to keep their hostages. Well might Richard Capell write, "This is a singular episode in our history, this sacrifice of honour to a parliamentary need and a clamour of journalists. A bitter hour it must have been for Scobie. . . . The truce terms represent . . . a success for the majority of the newspaper correspondents in Athens." *

When, later, in February, the Plastiras Cabinet signed a peace agreement with the rebels, an amnesty was extended to all those not proved guilty of crimes such as murder. Other concessions to the rebels were so generous that a first perusal of the terms makes it difficult to discover which of the two signatory parties were the rebels. With unusual frankness the E.A.M. representative, Siantos, stated, "We are very pleased and satisfied with this agreement". They had every reason to be. Under British pressure a policy of extreme appeasement had again been tried, which, as later events were to show, gave every opportunity to the rebels to resume their excesses in Northern Greece.

But over a month *before* this agreement was signed, as between honourable political opponents, the world learned of the brutal terrorism that had taken place among the Greeks in E.L.A.S.-occupied Athens. For as the Communist troops withdrew they left behind the evidence of the torture and massacre to which the Greek people had been subjected. Thousands of bodies were found piled in heaps in outhouses, cellars, lavatories and down wells. Then, first in north Athens and afterwards in other districts, mass graves were discovered into which had been thrown murdered hostages by the hundred. At Peristeri, where

* *Simiomata*, by Richard Capell, p. 163.

the executioners had been women, batches of corpses were found butchered by axe-blows and revolver shots in the head. Most of the victims had been mutilated before death, by being crushed with stones, having one or both eyes gouged out, their mouths slit to the ear, or by subjection to castration, disembowelling and grosser abominations. At Galatsi all the victims had been crudely killed with axes. Among the first 1200 bodies exhumed, nearly 200 were women and girls. Some were children of twelve or thirteen.

To those who had served in Greece, and experienced the kindness of the ordinary people, and had heard them express emotionally their gratitude to England, the pitiless treatment of captured British troops and Greek civilians by the guerillas was incomprehensible. At about the time of the massacres I was serving in official posts in Roumania and Yugoslavia, where I was in close touch with Communists, and where I had seen how implacable is the spirit they show against whoever resists their plans. But most of the rebels were not subject to any strong ideological urge. They were unstable men from the towns as much as from the mountains, recruited from among the discontented elements of the whole country. Among them, undisciplined sadists and hooligans became the leaders in the mass savageries that the Germans had favoured. The tortures and mutilations, however, bore the stamp of something devilish, like the monstrous cruelties of the Ustashi and their kind in Yugoslavia.

In Britain the news of the massacres, presented at first with reservations, was received dubiously. But a delegation from the British Trades Union Congress, headed by Sir Walter Citrine, which had gone to Greece primarily to investigate trade union difficulties, became involved in the scene of death and desolation that E.L.A.S. had left behind. They watched disinterments, and questioned survivors and other Greek civilians. They found that O.P.L.A. had sought out and murdered 114 trade union officials. "One thing apparent without a shadow of doubt," Citrine declared, "is that . . . there has been cold-blooded, organised, systematic murder." Even such guaranteed

non-Fascist evidence of the true nature of E.L.A.S. did little to influence many of those who had so strongly supported E.A.M. Professor Laski,* for example, was not impressed, and airily disposed of the massacres as a breaking of eggs for the omelette of a "new world". Such was a typical angle of the extremist elements, by whose views the British and American Governments had seemingly been so swayed in building up their antagonism to the monarchist influence in Greece.

Citrine and his colleagues talked also with British troops, who were angry that their work in holding back the rebels had been decried in England as a Fascist-Monarchist drive against democracy. "We found great and universal resentment among the British troops at what they considered the inadequate and unfair manner in which recent events in Greece had been presented to the British public through the newspapers and by certain members of Parliament."†

The constant distortion of the whole Greek tragedy by the Press had, indeed, been one of the strongest influences in intensifying the suffering brought to the Greek people. Mr. Churchill, knowing how his freedom of action in Greece had been cramped by these irresponsible misrepresentations, inflicted an unusual castigation in Parliament. "How can we wonder at, still less complain of, the attitude of hostile or indifferent newspapers in the United States, when we have here in this country witnessed such melancholy exhibitions as are provided by some of our most time-honoured and responsible journals? Our task, hard as it has been and is still, has been rendered vastly more difficult by the spirit of gay, reckless, unbridled partisanship, which has been let loose on the Greek question and has fallen upon those who have to bear the burden of Government in times like these." Mr. Churchill spoke strongly and feelingly. It was perhaps an understandable omission that nobody mentioned how heavily the "reckless, unbridled partisanship" of the Press had fallen upon the head of the hapless King, who bore the burden of moral responsibility, but was deprived of the power to act.

* Laski in the *Chicago Sun*, February 16th, 1945.

† *What We Saw in Greece*. Report of the T.U.C. Delegation.

As the true and sordid nature of the ferocious attack on the State by lawless gangs of bandits was fully disclosed, how futile became some of the Press statements recently made in support of the rebels. "More and more this fight develops into a struggle between Right and Left," had stated one of the leading British dailies, pontifically ignoring the Liberal-Venizelist-Republican complexion of the Papandreou Government. "E.A.M. is agitating for an American style republic," brightly declared the worst-informed Chicago newspaper. "The Greeks feel that they want to decide for themselves who should govern and how. England however insisted that they just accept King George, who will rule as Britain wishes. This the Greeks refuse to accept." So explained another American newspaper. "E.A.M.'s chief anxiety is that elections shall be freely conducted," revealed a famous British weekly.

As the shadow of the E.L.A.S. menace withdrew to the hills, so Greece was able at last to attend to her wounds. In Athens alone 20,000 people, men, women and children, had been massacred in cold blood by the so-called patriot democrats, while thousands of others were on the verge of starvation. But now relief was entering by Military Liaison and U.N.R.R.A. With astonishing resilience, the Greeks began to banish fear and to resume their ordinary life. E.A.M. bullies, part of the carefully prepared governmental and administrative machinery for taking over control of the country, who were running provincial towns and villages, reluctantly surrendered their powers to Government officials backed by British troops. In accordance with the truce terms, E.L.A.S. handed over their arms, or rather the oldest and most useless, keeping the newer British weapons for future use. The nucleus of irreconcilables, the known murderers and criminals, planning already to continue guerilla revolution, moved to the security of the mountains. The Government was not permitted to punish the rebels, in spite of their known atrocities. However, they turned instead to putting German collaborationists on trial. This seemed an opportune moment for somebody to disclose a letter that Plastiras wrote to the Greek Ambassador in Vichy in July, 1941, in which he stated that he had tried to arrange

a settlement of the Italian conflict through German mediation. This revelation forced him to resign, and his place was taken eventually by M. Sophoulis. Although government was still in turmoil, in the villages people began to talk hopefully of the future. They discussed the promised elections and the opportunity they would have to state their will. Then in Thessaly and the Peloponnese rose the old cry, for so long driven underground, but now shouted openly, "*Erchetai!*" ("He is coming!")

It became clear to the Republicans in Greece that in many districts Royalist sentiment was mounting, and that a decision on the monarchy should not be delayed. The Royalists asked that a plebiscite should be held before the election, because the question of the monarchy was a constitutional one that should be considered apart from the political issues of an election. The Republicans pressed for an election first, hoping that the expected majority demonstration of anti-monarchism would win them a full political victory. As usual, they gained their way. A general election was held on March 31st. Scattered throughout Greece were 1400 British, American and French official observers, the U.S.S.R. having refused to provide their quota.

Although a Government of strong republican and left-wing tendencies was then in power, and although, or perhaps because, the presence of Allied observers guaranteed a straight election, the Communist Party refused to take part in the voting. The observers reported that the election was run fairly and that its results were valid. The Royalist parties obtained 63.6 per cent of the votes, and under the Proportional Representation system obtained 235 seats out of a total of 345. The voters numbered 1,117,000 out of a registered electorate of 1,850,000. Of the 733,000 non-voters, 280,000 were estimated by the Allied observers to be members of the left-wing parties, who abstained from voting for political reasons. The remaining 453,000 refrained from voting for other, non-political reasons. Thus the "wish of the nation manifest in every direction" for which British policy had thrust the monarchy aside and brought such terrible suffering upon

the Greek people consisted of the aspirations of 280,000 extreme left-wing voters, influenced by a minority of Communists, out of an electorate of 1,850,000.

A new Government was formed under a Populist Premier, Tsaldaris. The election had shown that the country wished for the return of the monarchy, and steps were taken to hasten it. During the interval between the elections and the plebiscite the electoral registers were checked and revised under British and American supervision. The sentiments of the native-born inhabitants of Greece, always predominantly Royalist in the rural districts and divided between Royalist and Republican in the urban districts, were supported now by large sections of the old refugee population which had previously been Republican in both urban and rural districts, but which had learned a lesson in the recent upheavals.

The plebiscite was held on September 1st, 1946, again under Allied supervision. Once more the King "displayed dignity and tact, and no exception could be taken to the appeals which he addressed to his people".* There were few political abstentions for this event, the parties of the extreme left now throwing their weight in to the scales against the return of the monarchy. Ninety-five per cent of the electorate voted. The Royalists obtained 1,170,000 votes (65 per cent) as against a Republican vote of 523,000 (30 per cent). At last the world learned the real sentiment of the Greek people.

* *The Times* in its obituary on King George in the following year.

CHAPTER XIII

THE END OF A JOURNEY

EVEN though the March elections had clearly indicated that Greece wished to be ruled by the Right, King George remained quietly in his hotel in London, continuing with his normal routine, and showing that he did not intend to anticipate the result of the plebiscite. For although his own conviction told him that he would surely be recalled, to the outside world the result was not so foregone. A large proportion of the populace had not spoken in the elections, and no one knew for certain how many of those who had abstained from voting, over and above the Communists and their allies, might be hostile to the continuation of the monarchy. But the King did and said nothing that might directly or indirectly influence the Greek nation in favour of his return. He was content to leave the verdict entirely to their own free judgment.

Nevertheless, the members of his family were optimistic. From many sources of information in Greece they heard how all classes of the people, of all shades of political following, longed to see with them again the unifying influence of the Crown, ". . . so that all division . . . should cease among us". The Crown Prince and Princess came to England, leaving their children in Alexandria, where they had lived since arriving in Egypt from South Africa at the end of 1943. The King held long discussions with his brother, who then returned to Egypt to await the result of the plebiscite.

King George was still staying at Claridges when the count was held. Impatiently the King's aides and secretaries waited by the tape machine for the early results to be announced. Just as the first figures came through the King descended from his suite. Levidis and the others watched him as he came to the machine, where he had so

often found vituperation of himself by Britons, Americans, Greeks, Russians, by politicians, political organisations, newspapers, and by all the unjust voices of the past four years. Day by day he had walked over to the machine and scanned all this calumny and invective without showing any sign of his inward anger and indignation. But this time there was something different—a message from the people from whom he had been kept away so long. He read the first result—the voting of the little village of Spata, near Marathon, a few miles from Athens. The King saw that the village had a population of 303, and that 301 of them had voted for his return. He stood motionless for a full minute, then moved quietly, without a word for his staff, to the restaurant where he normally sat and ate alone. Tears dropped unheeded down his face as he walked unseeingly through the crowd to his table.

He knew that all these years of denunciation as the oppressor of his people had ended, that at last the true voice of Greece had spoken and vindicated his belief in them. The realisation shook his stoical reserve. How true again were the simple words of the motto of his family crest, "My strength lies in the love of my people". Just as the saddest moment in the King's life had been that day in Cairo in October, 1944, when he was not permitted to return with his Government to Greece, so this moment by the tape-machine at Claridges, as Colonel Levidis told me, was surely the happiest.

The results poured in continuously, soon leaving no doubt as to the final result. How abundantly justified now was King George's persistent faith in himself as the trusted leader of his people. How the final figures of the plebiscite confounded the stereotyped accusations of Fascism and despotism that his enemies had flung against him. Amid all the clamour and abuse, he alone had gained dignity and integrity by his silence and restraint. It would perhaps have been too much to expect that those who had maligned and misrepresented him in the past should now admit their errors. The result of the plebiscite did at least compel some of them to silence—those who could not deny so clear a testimony from the Greek people. But there were

others, Communists and their friends abroad, who would not change their tune, whatever the facts, who declared that the plebiscite, like the election, was faked, that both had been manipulated by Britain in order to place the Greek people under "Monarcho-Fascist" rule.

Early on September 27th, the King left Northolt by air, alighting that afternoon at Elefsis airfield. With him were Colonel Levidis and Mr. Pipinelis, his diplomatic adviser, and others of his personal staff. For security reasons, conflicting news of his journey—for example, that he would go via Malta, thence in a British man-of-war—had been allowed to leak out. His unheralded arrival in an aeroplane over five years after he had left Crete in a British destroyer was not the formal return. The King was met by the Regent, the Premier, and a few Ministers, and drove at once to a quay, from which a pinnace took him to the Greek destroyer *Miaoulis*. Awaiting him, just arrived from Egypt, were Crown Prince Paul and Princess Frederica. That evening, at last in their own country's waters, they toasted the future well-being of Greece.

The news of the arrival spread rapidly round Athens, which was soon agog with excitement. Groups of people stood excitedly discussing the event, others sang national and patriotic songs. Above the city hung the ghostly beauty of the eternal Parthenon, floodlit to mark the eve of a new era in the Greek story.

The next day the King landed at Piraeus, accompanied by the Crown Prince and Princess and the entourage. After the official reception they drove through excited, cheering crowds to the Cathedral, to attend a special service of thanksgiving. In its volume of enthusiasm the welcome by the citizens of Athens equalled that given to King George in 1935, but this time there was a quality of relief, of hope, that gave their cheers a deeper meaning, for the sufferings of the past five years had left their mark. The service over, there followed for the King a day of ceremonial functions, and finally of retirement to sleep once more on Greek soil.

Although the King was content in the knowledge that his policy of resisting the Communist effort to weaken



Her Majesty the Queen of the Hellenes



Greece had proved correct, he knew also that the legacy of past mistakes remained still to be overcome. All that had happened since the guerillas withdrew from Athens in January—the “peace” agreement, the election, the plebiscite—had done little to lessen the seditious movement. Certainly, it had retired away from the capital, and the immediate risk was over, but the struggle still continued, transferred now to the north, where the guerillas were kept active by the support of Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The release from gaol of some 7,500 insurgents, who were given their liberty under the Sophoulis Government, and many of whom joined their comrades, gave fresh strength and impulse to the movement. Communists of Greek nationality were given guerilla training in Rubic in Albania, and at Bulkes in the province of Voivodine in Yugoslavia. Bands of these men began systematic infiltration into Greek territory. Raids on villages and the murder of gendarmes went on with unremitting violence, especially in Western Macedonia, now the key to the struggle to incorporate Greek Macedonia into the Yugoslav federation.

The King strove unceasingly to persuade the political parties to unite against this threat to the country's security, and succeeded to some extent—the Maximos Coalition of January, 1947, was largely due to his endeavours—but all efforts at compromise with the Communist-inspired irreconcilables of the extreme left were obstinately rejected. Party manœuvrings continued. Dissension, guerilla warfare, murder, robbery and the threat of rebellion dominated every angle of the national life. All the efforts of the Government to maintain order and protect innocent villagers were decried in left-wing circles abroad as a return to Fascist oppression. Voices were still raised to justify massacre and rapine as “the breaking of eggs for the omelette of the new world order”. The King was still traduced by the Communists and their “fellow-travellers” throughout the world. Now, however, their reasons were exposed and understood, for the monarchy stood clearly as the chief barrier against the Communist aim to complete their full grip on the Balkans.

In endeavouring to induce the political leaders to work together, the King did not try to assert his authority to the limit of the powers afforded him by the Constitution. Hard lessons had taught him to keep on the right side of the letter of the law. Governments came and went, beaten by the situation and by their own lack of realism. The King was absorbed in the burden of his responsibilities, for the country suffered under grinding poverty and distress caused by high prices, lack of food, fuel and accommodation, and of means of inter-communication by road and rail. Shadowing every effort at reconstruction was the cost and wastage of man-power involved in keeping an army mobilised to resist the guerillas. The King's long-acquired tendencies to live within himself were intensified by these difficulties. Holding only the simplest, most informal Court, he neither accepted invitations, unless to significant diplomatic parties, nor issued them. He avoided Press interviewers and photographers. His public appearances were confined to official or religious functions and an occasional concert. So he passed an austere and exacting existence, with little diversion from his work, almost his only private interest being the problem of the repair and refurnishing of the summer palace at Tatoi.

Just as when the Royal Family returned to Athens after King George's recall in 1935 their first thoughts were for the house at Tatoi, with its bitter-sweet memories, so on this later restoration King George drove as soon as he could, with his brother and the Crown Princess, to see the home of their boyhood. In 1935 they had found the Palace more or less as they had left it twelve years before, still in habitable condition, for it had been used as a summer residence by a succession of Republican Ministers. In 1946 there were no such expectations. When the King flew to Crete in 1941, he abandoned the Palace as it stood, as nothing bulky could be taken away in an air evacuation. Silver, portraits, ornaments and all the hundreds of personal objects that a family collects over three-quarters of a century were left to the mercy of the invader. Throughout the occupation, except for a few minor pilferings, the Germans respected the amenities of the Palace, in spite of their dislike

of the King and the knowledge that the estate was his own private property.

But now, in 1946, King George and his brother knew that their old home had been sacked by the insurgents, and that everything valuable had been taken away. As they drove northwards they saw how the miles of woods surrounding the estate had been despoiled to provide fuel for the people of Athens during the occupation, and they prepared themselves for the worst. They had heard that the Royal mausoleum had been desecrated, but were relieved to find that the rebels had contented themselves with scribbling obscene and ribald remarks on the tombs. But in the Palace, which had been used as a headquarters by one of the revolutionary political organisations, the brothers found a chaos of destruction, before which they could only stand in amazed and angry disgust.

Every window in the house had been shattered, every door thrust down. As the King and Crown Prince walked from room to room, so alive with recollections of other days, they saw in every one the evidence of insensate destruction. Yet far worse sights had met the first visitors months before. Then still lay the litter of wrecked furniture, broken chairs and tables, mirrors in fragments, pictures, books and bric-à-brac in jumbled heaps. Wall tapestries had been torn down, lamp fittings wrenched away, lavatory and wash-basins smashed. The upholstery of every mattress, settee and padded chair had been ripped open, and the flock, feathers and other stuffing strewn over the floors. Curtains, carpets, cushions, silver, ornaments, personal belongings—everything portable had gone. A room on the first floor had been used as a revolutionary court of "justice". Corpses of victims still lay in shallow graves outside. Such was the indication of what the rebels might have done had they ever obtained possession of the centre of Athens, with its Government and other official buildings and its thousands of tempting houses and flats.

Since there was no hope of occupying Tatoi for many months, the King resided permanently in Athens at the "new" Palace, originally built as a residence for the Crown Prince in the time of King George I. The original

Palace, overlooking Constitution Square, was taken over by the Republican Government in 1926, for the use of the Chamber of Deputies and Council of State and some departments of the General Staff. As there was no other official residence, the Crown Prince and Princess returned with their children to their villa at Psychico, a pleasant Athens suburb.

The King lived quietly not only because of the weight of his duties, but also because the strain of the past few years had begun to tell on his health. He had once been a fit, sturdily built man, and as recently as 1941 could undertake the journey over the White Mountains of Crete that had tried even the younger people with him. The succession of photographs in this book shows how events had worn him down to a thin shadow of his former self, for the strain of the bitterness and disappointments of the past four thwarted years, which he had borne with rigid self-control without the relief of being able to fight back, had eaten not into his resolution but into his physique.

King George was a sick man when he returned to Greece, although he never realised how sick he was. He did not spare himself, and even as late as March 25th spent two hours standing at the salute at a march past on the Anniversary of the Declaration of the War of Independence. A couple of days later he complained of heaviness and pains in the chest, but was assured he had no organic trouble and was suffering from nerves, for which he was given an injection. In a letter written on Sunday the 30th, and never completed, he told his correspondent that he was feeling ill and exhausted, as though convalescing. He was given another injection on the Monday morning, and that evening, with several members of the Royal Family, attended a charity performance of the British film *Henry V*, organised by the British Ambassador, Sir Clifford Norton, in aid of the orphaned children of Greece.

Sunday, April 6th, was the anniversary of the relief of Missolonghi in 1825. King George had decided to preside at the annual ceremony there, one of his tasks being to lay a wreath on the memorial of Byron. On Monday morning he discussed his visit with Colonel Levidis, checking over

in detail the arrangements for staying the night of the 5th at Patras, crossing to Missolonghi next day, and returning to Athens on the second night. When Levidis was about to leave the Palace they stood together by the bottom of the Grand Stairway, and while they confirmed the final timings, the King sat casually on the stairs, as he had often done before. Levidis reminded him that they were dining that night at the French Embassy. As the King walked up the stairs, he said he still had the pain in his chest, and Levidis noticed that he walked draggingly.

Levidis drove to his house at Kallini, and as he was preparing for lunch the telephone bell rang. A voice told him to hurry back to Athens, as the King was dying. Staggered and incredulous, he told his wife, who reminded him of the date and the possibility of a stupid April fool joke. Swearing dire punishment if anybody had been so stupid, Levidis ran to his car and drove to Athens in nine minutes instead of the fifteen or twenty that he usually takes. But he was too late. King George was dead.

After he had gone to his salon, and luncheon was announced, the King had said he had no appetite, but would attempt a light meal in his room. He sent for his duty A.D.C. to join him. A few minutes later the butler entered the room, to find the King lying on a settee. He was already unconscious. Always a meticulously careful man, he had opened his handkerchief and placed it on the arm of the settee before resting his head there. The A.D.C. arrived. Princess Katherine was fetched immediately only to find, to her agitation and distress, that her brother was past help. Prince Paul, Levidis, the doctor, were all telephoned, but when they came the King had drawn his last breath. Prince Paul and Princess Katherine were at first too stunned by the suddenness of their brother's passing to realise that it was a King who had died. Then the flag on the Royal Palace was lowered to half-mast and the Premier and other Ministers were informed. At four o'clock it was announced on the Athens radio that the King had expired at 1.55 p.m. of arterio-sclerosis.

To Colonel Levidis this sudden end to a close association of a quarter of a century came as so great a shock that for

some time he moved around the Palace in a dazed state, not knowing, or remembering afterwards, what he did. Twenty minutes later he realised that he was sitting at his desk in the Palace, already drafting out the preliminary arrangements for the funeral. Automatically, he had wandered there to undertake the grievous duty that now fell to him.

At eight o'clock that evening, in the presence of the Holy Synod, the Cabinet, Members of Parliament and high officials, the Crown Prince took the Oath, as King Paul I. At the same time Prince Constantine was formally proclaimed Diadoch. The King's oath was administered by Archbishop Damaskinos, the former Regent, and took the following form : "I swear in the name of the Holy Trinity to protect the nation's religion, to respect the Constitution, and defend the freedom and integrity of Greece." In a Proclamation to the Greek people, the new King said, "With a quiet conscience my beloved brother left the world. There is no sacrifice within human bounds that he has not offered to the country. I am called upon to-day to continue his task. Our immortal country calls on us to fight for her existence, her independence, and her liberation. United we shall bring the task to a successful conclusion." At once King Paul began his duties as Head of the State. Prime Minister Maximos formally presented the resignation of his Government and was asked to continue in office.

On Thursday King George's body was moved to the Cathedral, where it lay in state for three days. Thousands of people passed the bier to bid a last farewell to the King who had suffered so much in sustaining the probity of the State that he had led to such great heights six years before.

By King Paul's desire, no flowers were sent to the funeral, and those of the nation who wished to pay tribute to the late King's memory were asked to send donations to the Fund for War Widows and Orphans. The funeral took place on Sunday the 6th, the day the King should have been at Missolonghi. The procession walked from the church to the outskirts of the city, then went by car to the family mausoleum at Tatoi, where the King was laid by the side of his parents and brother. Those who saw the procession to and from the church will not easily forget the affecting

sight of the tiny Crown Prince Constantine, dressed simply, with no show of mourning, walking hand in hand with his tall, massive father, who strode with face set and serious at the realisation of the great responsibilities now fallen from his brother's shoulders to his own.

There were many tributes to King George in the Athens Press. Even those papers which had been sometimes against him in the past were stilled into respect for a man who had so clearly possessed a burning sense of his duty to Greece. Others were laudatory. The newspaper *Airópolis* declared that "his austere countenance has passed into the Parthenon of Greek history", while the *Hestia* wrote: "At the head of his people, during the final phase of the struggle, King George died doing his duty". Said the *Embros*: "His sense of duty was inflexible. Destiny did not give him a day's rest, yet he never lost his calm serenity." Of them all, however, the most discerning tribute was contained in the compassionate comment of the *Kathimerini*, which, recalling the King's long burden of tribulation, wrote, "Last night was surely the first through which King George slept peacefully".

Messages of sympathy and tributes to the late King poured in to King Paul from all parts of the world. Some were purely official, some came from friends, and from those who had known and liked the King. Some came from those who had worked with or near him in the past, who had not always seen eye to eye with him, but who respected him as a man. The absence of messages of condolence from two of the British statesmen with whom King George had worked most closely since 1940 was naturally the subject of speculation and comment in Court and Government circles.

Among all those who knew the King closely, his relations as well as his friends and the members of his entourage, there is unanimity that the King's death was brought on by overwork following years of frustration and inward bitterness of spirit, when he had stood alone, abandoned by his powerful friends, to face the world-wide hostility provoked by those who, it is now realised, were the enemies of all true democracy, as well as of Greece. "This King who

had only his country's interest at heart, the truest Hellene of them all, calumniated, betrayed, insulted, hounded like a criminal, and finally dying in exile of a broken heart." These words were written by Prince Nicholas of his brother Constantine. Except that King George died in Athens, they could have been written with equal truth about him. His enemies were the enemies of his office rather than of his person, but their hostility centred on him as a man because he resisted their attacks with every patient effort he could muster. But although it was he who suffered, it was the monarchy they wished to destroy, and while they did not succeed in destroying the monarchy, they succeeded in killing the man.

It was in keeping with Fate's capricious dispensations to his family that death should come to the King as soon as he had achieved the aim for which he had waited so long—his restoration by the unquestionable will of the people, at a time when his presence and the unifying influence of the Crown could be of incalculable service to the Greek nation. Of his reign of twenty-five years, only seven had been spent in Greece, but now at last he knew the long years of frustration were to be balanced by years of achievement. At last he could fulfil the destiny to which he had been born and to which he had subordinated his whole life. Before him lay uncharted seas of opportunity to serve Greece. The desperate position of his country had been lightened immeasurably by the announcement, less than a month before, of American aid and support. For the first time for many years he felt that Fate might now be kinder. And then, at the early age of fifty-six, death closed his thwarted life.

CHAPTER XIV

"CHARACTER IS DESTINY"

"CHARACTER is destiny," declared Novalis. "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves," wrote Shakespeare. But the modern doctrine considers man as the prisoner of events and circumstances, and so does not accept these adages. The truth lies surely somewhere between the two extremes. A strong man can still create his own destiny, yet no matter how determined he may be, there are forces, such as the catastrophic results of war and revolution, that he can neither override nor evade. In the shaping of their destinies, the members of the Greek Royal Family, in nearly all its branches, have seldom been allowed to live according to their own desire, or to die peacefully after a long and satisfying life. Strong forces, both blind and malign, both close and remote, have dominated them. Their worst sufferings have arisen not from their own weaknesses, but from the impact of happenings beyond their control, or from the unpredictable whims of Fate.

It was the accident of high birth and not any outstanding force of character that placed both King Constantine and King George II in the centre of world controversies, and yet both men made history as well as lived in it. For in their reactions to events, father and son marked out their destinies, and those of thousands of other men and women, as surely as if they had been figures of dynamic fire instead of merely firm tenacity. The motive that swayed their actions was primarily their wish to benefit Greece, yet in the grip of powerful external forces that robbed them of almost everything but their honour, they became closely identified with the passionate faction and strife that have caused Greece so much suffering for thirty years.

Because the world has learned to judge both kings by the discords rather than the harmonies of their reigns, so

it has lost sight of the merits of their views, even though present-day knowledge has exposed the fallacious or sinister designs of those who opposed them. We know now that both men ruined their own lives and nearly destroyed their dynasty by holding obdurately to courses that they considered right in principle. It may well be asked whether they would not have achieved a higher repute if they had compromised with the forces that assailed them. By a little pliability of attitude, they might both have avoided years of exile and humiliation for themselves and the Royal Family, and of suffering for Greece. History may well say this of King Constantine, but never of King George, for already events have shown that had he bowed to the storm, he would have failed the State he had sworn to defend.

The parallels and differences between the lives of father and son show strongly how in modern days the King can do no right. Both were determined, indeed obstinate, men, who suffered because they would not compromise on their ideals. But while Constantine was attacked for wishing to be neutral against Germany in 1914, George was attacked because of the indirect results of fighting her in 1941. Both men were placed in the wrong by the intrigues of their Premiers, and both intriguers opened the gates to the hurt and degradation of Greece. Both Kings were the victims of schisms among their people provoked by foreign Powers—by Entente politics in 1917, by Russian-guided Communism in 1944. Both men were victims of a worldwide campaign of vilification in the Press. Both died before their time through the physical reactions to mortifying frustration and discomfiture.

King Constantine's reasons for his actions in 1914 were obscured by propaganda that he was a pro-German traitor, but there is now ample evidence that his motive was the one by which his whole life had been influenced—devotion to what he considered to be the best interests of Greece. Lacking such an impulse, his adult life and career would have been without meaning. The character of King George II is illuminated by exactly the same inspiration—devotion to what he considered the country's real interests.

If it is arguable that the father's troubles came partly from failure to appreciate what really was the wisest course for Greece, no such argument can be brought against the son.

Since 1935 all the major decisions of his life, although misinterpreted and misrepresented at the time, have been proved to be right by the test of whether they were to the ultimate good of Greece. No one can now suggest that he should have held back Metaxas, and permitted the continuation of the political degradation that he found in 1935. Or that Greece's sufferings might have been avoided had he insisted on submission to Italy or an arrangement with Germany, or, later, a conciliatory surrender to a Communist-controlled minority. We know now that to have adopted any of these courses would have meant the destruction of the Greek spirit and identity. Yet for his action in 1936 he has since been accused of being a dictator; for his stand in 1941, of sacrificing Greece to some guileless idea of honour ("indescribable naivety" and "an unheard-of frivolity" were General Plastiras's views of the resistance to the German invasion); for his attitude in 1943 and 1944, of being a tyrant and Fascist. The truth is that the scrupulous fidelity to Greece that lay behind all these acts had in it the quality that leads a man to great destiny. But for King George the road to destiny led also to universal condemnation, not because he was wrong, but because he was right.

Of all the characteristics that marked King George, the most outstanding and persistent was unquestionably this inflexible sense of duty to Greece and of devotion to the well-being of her people. He had no strong ambition other than to serve Greece, and all his actions derived from this one motive. In office he shrank from no action that was necessary for the performance of this duty, and in exile would do nothing that might injure the ultimate unity of his country. Fretting in impotent idleness in London, he grieved for his people, but for their sakes remained silent and inactive, although often to his personal disadvantage. In his self-denying devotion to Greece, King George showed all the qualities of an ascetic, which is what he really became during the last few years of his life.

To his sense of duty King George chose deliberately to sacrifice the personal happiness that awaited him had he decided to abdicate. The external trappings of majesty, the "pomp and circumstance" of the throne, had long ago ceased to appeal. It would not have been a great sacrifice to pass such regal appurtenances to his brother, Crown Prince Paul. Before the war, at his villa in Corfu, he had glimpsed fugitive visions of the contentment that the man who does not wear a crown can claim as his right. Although as a private citizen he possessed no large income, he could have retired on the modest capital that he had saved over the years.

The unpleasant time through which he passed after 1942 must often have led him to contemplate the fuller, happier life he could have enjoyed by giving up the throne to marry a commoner, the woman he had loved for twelve years, and whose companionship—the only real personal solace in his loneliness—he could not openly acknowledge. Yet never for a moment did he seriously consider entering on a carefree private life while Greek affairs remained so dire and dangerous. This is surely the strongest tribute to the depth of his devotion to Greece. Only perhaps when the country had achieved peace and stability, and a reasonable measure of prosperity, would he have agreed to abdicate and spend his remaining years in tranquil married life in the English countryside.

That a man could continue most of his life to endure so oppressive a burden of misfortune and self-denial, especially in the face of apparent rejection by the object of his concern, has only one explanation. Although he never expressed the thought, King George undoubtedly felt that by his birth, Fate had cast for him the role of bearing great responsibility for the good of the Greek nation. Under this conviction he became to some degree a fatalist. He endured his adversities without bitterness against those who caused them. He even restrained and rebuked the anger and resentment which those close to him were sometimes unable to resist expressing. "To be King of Greece is to bear a cross as well as to bear a crown." * King

* G. F. A. Voight, *Nineteenth Century*, February 1945.

George had wearily learned to accept this situation as his destiny, and did not quarrel with it. He bore his tribulations, as well as his triumphs, with calm and dignity. The campaign of calumny to which he was subjected caused him distress, but did not weaken his determination to adhere to what he felt to be his duty. Once he had decided on his course, nothing short of near disaster would shake him. Unaffected by public criticism, or by the loss of his friends and supporters, he stood indomitably against any influence that he thought might adversely affect Greece.

Throughout his life the King showed himself to be possessed of strong moral courage. He proved it when he first came from Bucharest to London, where King Constantine was still regarded as the arch-enemy of Britain. There was at first great prejudice against George, son of Constantine, but his conscience was clear, and he won the battle against his detractors. Again he showed it when, returning to Greece in 1935, he dismissed the man who had brought about the return of the monarchy, and insisted on an amnesty. A year afterwards saw his risky, unpopular support of Metaxas, and five years later his defiance of Germany. Perhaps he reached his zenith in his prolonged resistance to the British-backed Communist influence in Greece. Of his physical courage, his conduct in Crete is sufficient evidence, as also his wish to return to Greece at the end of December, 1944, to place himself in what might have been the highly dangerous van of the constitutional authority.

The determination and courage that he showed in 1941 brought many republicans to his side, in both Greece and the Middle East, among them Napoleon Zervas, leader of the largest non-Communist resistance band. Before Zervas went to organise resistance in Western Greece, he was a life-long anti-monarchist. In Athens, in 1947, he explained to me why he had changed his views. When, in the mountains, he learned from officers who had joined him as guerillas the story of King George's resolution after Metaxas's death, and of his soldierly conduct in Crete, he decided that only the King could give Greece the leadership she needed against the E.A.M. organisation. As

leader of the patriotic elements of resistance, he pledged allegiance to the Crown. At the beginning of 1944 a parachuted British officer brought a message from King George, promising his help in gaining British support, and when aid came Zervas sent a letter of thanks, proclaiming the King as the First Greek.

I asked Zervas why he had been anti-monarchist before 1942. He laughed and explained. In 1912 he was a cadet-officer at a training-school awaiting confirmation of his officer rank. He and a number of other cadets were suddenly ordered to parade for an inspection by King Constantine, who had made an unexpected visit. The cadets had no chance to prepare themselves, and were unshaven and in their working Evzone uniforms. After one glance, the King refused to complete the inspection, and expressed his displeasure in impolite terms. Zervas was provoked into stepping forward to state a complaint. He said he resented the King's attitude, as he and his comrades were not to blame. Recalling the incident, he admitted that it was hardly surprising that his impudence earned him forty days' imprisonment. But the result was that he turned violently against the King, and as the years passed took part in most of the anti-monarchist troubles that helped to blight the country until 1936. He reversed his views when he learned of King George's fine personal qualities in war. I read in these admissions confirmation of how politics in Greece rest on accidents of personality rather than on social principles.

Accustomed by his life in England to wider political perspectives than those in Greece, King George possessed a shrewd and broad-minded approach to the country's political problems. But he showed little approval for the play of political intrigue, because of its futility and waste, and because it failed to give the country stable government and administration. Nevertheless, he had learned in years of contemplation of past events in Greece, and especially of the causes of his father's troubles, to be patient and cautious, and to insist on a conciliatory attitude to those politically opposed to the monarchy. Even at the cost of sometimes seeming ungrateful to those who had supported

him, he did all he could to heal the wounds of past strife and partisanship. It was such efforts of pacification in 1935 that had earned the support of Venizelos. Unfortunately, the King's attitude was sometimes regarded as weakness, and did not inspire a fair response from many of those around him, but even with irreconcilables he showed justice and clemency when such action lay within his control.

Linked closely with King George's sense of duty was his sense of discipline, particularly of self-discipline. The keynote of his personal reaction to his detractors was patient resolution. He never allowed himself to descend to recrimination or cynicism. He imposed strong control over his actions, and seldom exposed his deeper feelings, whether pleased or angry. Although in later years sometimes irascible, he was normally temperate, and reluctant to meet anger with anger. He tried usually to make allowances for the other man's point of view, to act on the basis of the fair-play and reasonableness that he learned to admire in Britain.

But his reasonableness was not entirely a development of exile. Colonel Levidis recounted an example of it from the days of the King's early army service. As an infantry major in 1913, he was leading his battalion into Athens, after a spell of exercises. He was mounted, as was his adjutant, then Lieutenant Levidis, and a band played stirring airs, while onlookers waved friendly greetings. As they approached Omonia Square, Levidis noticed that an army colonel, walking towards them on the pavement, showed no sign of being about to salute the Crown Prince. Prince George noticed also, but said nothing. At the last moment, just before the colonel passed, the Prince saluted. Levidis protested that the officer should be reprovved for not saluting the son of the King. "The reason he did not salute me was because he did not recognise me," replied the Crown Prince. "Therefore, to him I was just a major in the Greek Army, and it became my duty to salute my superior officer."

The discipline that King George laid on himself from his early manhood undoubtedly helped to induce him to

reticence. Constant repression of his instinctive reactions to the unjust treatment of his father and himself developed an habitual reserve of manner, which the unhappy events of his first short reign, and the numerous humiliations imposed on him and the family, greatly emphasised. In exile his outward taciturnity became in part an unconscious measure of self-protection against the over-curious. As he grew older, and especially as the plaudits of 1941 were replaced by the abuse of 1943, he tended to avoid company, except for a select band of old and intimate friends. His reticence over official matters, especially unpleasant ones, became pronounced. He would keep a secret, official or otherwise, from his nearest associates, even indeed from his brother Paul. Towards the end of his life he drew more and more within himself. In Athens the significance that was always placed on his contacts precluded him from making close friendships, in either political or social circles. He became a lonely man. Fortunately for his peace of mind, he possessed great reserves of spiritual strength, on which he was able to draw during the darkest days of 1944 and 1945. This strength rested greatly on a deep religious feeling, not dependent on outward formalism, but on an unshakeable faith in an after-life. It was this inner power that enabled him to resist with apparent imperturbability the final crescendo in the campaign of vilification that might have broken a man dependent only on his will.

Long years of his first exile without adequate means, and with no way of earning any money except by "stunt" propositions, did not make him more loquacious. Although adaptable in his conversation, and always ready to talk lengthily on subjects that interested him, he usually made little effort to initiate or join in social small talk. He was thus sometimes accused of being shy or supercilious, but he was neither, although he was impatient with pretension and aloof to insincerity. To those who took advantage of his normal accessibility, especially those who tried to introduce politics into social affairs, he would close up like an oyster, or even pointedly move away. His manner was normally quiet and modest, and in the company of those he liked or felt at home with he was completely natural. When



Crown Prince Constantine and his sisters, accompanied by Miss Athenogenes and Miss Maniatis in the Palace garden



"Look! There's Auntie Katherine!"

By the lily pool





*Royal Children enjoy a
day without words*



inspecting units of his Services, for example—as I myself saw in the Western Desert—he was easy, open and friendly, and evoked a corresponding reaction. Servants, tradesmen and people without social affectation always found him approachable and easy to chat with, and he in turn enjoyed the casual informality of the uninstructed.

Dining during the war with a couple of close friends in the intimacy of a little West End restaurant, he was addressed by a tipsy but amicable American sailor, who had no idea of the King's identity. He insisted on shaking hands and demanded the King's name and where he came from. “Oh, my name's George,” smilingly replied the King. “I'm from Greece.” “Greece, eh? Well, I'm Steve, and I'm from Texas. Well, I'll be seeing you, George.” He made his unsteady way to his table, where waiters informed him of his new acquaintance's identity. A few minutes later he returned accompanied by another, even more unsteady, American sailor. “Hello, King George,” he stated. “I want you to meet my buddy, Sam. He's from Texas, too. Shake hands with George, Sammy; he's a King, and he comes from Greece, and he's a good guy.” After more handshakes and fraternal protestations, the Americans were shepherded to their own table, leaving the King and his companions weak with laughter. King George delighted in such an incident, but there were few occasions on which they could happen.

A further consequence of King George's self-imposed discipline was the development of a meticulous ordering of his daily life. This trend was due partly to his having so little to do that was useful during much of his exile that he contrived to make every trifling act count for something in his empty day. He became systematic and precise in his affairs, and extremely tidy in personal transactions. His papers, private and official, were carefully folded and docketed. He opened all letters addressed to him, even when they were obviously trade circulars. He would not let anybody manage him, and made Levidis and the secretaries refer all proposed engagements for his concurrence. His staff could never take any decision for granted. He liked to arrange his exertions in his own way.

He never threw anything away. When opening parcels he would untie the string and fold the paper for future use. He introduced envelope economy labels in his Palace office long before they were thought of in Britain. In order to keep the King continuously informed of routine affairs without constantly disturbing him personally, Colonel Levidis made a habit of sending his notes and papers in special distinctive envelopes. The King always opened these envelopes carefully with a paper-knife, accumulated them, and sent them back in batches to Levidis to be used again.

Levidis told me of an occasion when the King's insistence on opening his parcels nearly led to a scene. A packet from Germany addressed "S. M. Koenig, Athens" arrived at the Palace and was placed on the King's desk according to normal routine. King George started to unfasten the string, which was dirty, as was also the parcel. The knots were stubborn, and Levidis produced a pocket-knife and held it out without a word. The King gave him a dour look, and continued untying the string. At length it was undone, and the paper removed, revealing a small wooden box with the lid nailed down. Levidis suggested that he send for a man to open it. But the King, shaking his head, pulled open a drawer of his desk and produced a neat packet of tools, with which he removed the lid. He lifted the packing, and Levidis, standing close, saw inside a clockwork contraption of springs and wheels. A bomb!

Without a second's hesitation he seized the box from under the nose of his protesting King, just about to investigate the mystery, took it hurriedly from the room and ordered a manservant to place it in a bucket of water until the police came. He returned with a glow of satisfaction at having probably saved the King's life, but, so far from being pleased, King George was annoyed at his equerry's impetuosity. He gave Levidis another look of displeasure, and started opening his letters.

The supposed bomb was examined by experts, who announced later in the day that "S. M. Koenig" did not mean "Seine Majestät Koenig" (His Majesty the King). They were the initials and name of a clock-maker in Athens!

By then the King was able to join in the laugh against Levidis.

It was in some ways a typical anomaly of the King's character that one so exact and methodical in his ordinary life should have died without making a will. He left detailed jottings about his intentions, but never arrived at the day of decision. This tendency of putting off action he did not relish was perhaps one of his weaknesses, that showed when he was faced with unpleasant tasks and problems in his official as well as his private life. Rendered cautious by long experience of the often fatal results of impulsiveness, he went to the other extreme of holding back from positive action, in small as well as important matters, to the point sometimes of seeming indecision.

Although sensitive to any action that could be regarded as a slight to the abstract dignity of the Greek throne, the vicissitudes of his life taught King George not to place too high an estimate on his own personal importance. He reacted irritably if his own staff “fussed” unduly about his rank and position or tried to be anything but normal in their contacts with him. He wished to live simply and unostentatiously. In exile he was extremely democratic in his approach to his surroundings. He would never try to take advantage of his rank in the everyday affairs of London life. For example, he insisted on taking his place in queues even when people knew him and wanted to accord him preference.

His liking for a simple, uncomplicated routine was carried even into his dietary. He was abstemious in food and drink, and although ready for an opportune sherry or brandy, normally drank very sparingly. At his hotels, where he insisted on being treated as any other guest, he chose from the ordinary menu, usually picking plainly cooked foods. Even in the Palace in Athens the same tendency showed. Each morning the chef submitted a list of dishes from which the King might choose his menu, and each day he would delete item after item, until only the homeliest meal was left. An old friend who had been staying in the Palace for several days at length protested. “If you go on every time like this you'll break the chef's

morale," she said. "This is the fourth day in succession that you've ordered cold beef for lunch."

Although normally inclined to seriousness, King George could, in suitable company, quickly pass to a lighter mood, when his conversation might be witty and entertaining, and lit up by playful digs at his friends as well as his enemies. He was a clever mimic, and chose many distinguished people as his victims. He had a loud and hearty laugh, a characteristic shared by several members of his family, and one that often drew attention to him in the theatre. Sometimes he would indulge in an unexpected joke at his own expense. During his first London exile he was leaving a large formal party, of the type he did not usually enjoy. His hostess joined him at the door as he and other guests waited for their cars. The footman announced, "The King of Greece's taxi." "Not taxi, Herbert," protested the hostess in a horrified whisper. "The King of Greece's car." "Oh, no," broke in King George, cheerfully and loudly. "The King of Greece's taxi. I can't afford a car of my own."

Perhaps because they had no inhibitions about his rank, or his alleged oppressions in Greece, children and dogs got on well with King George. Every dog was friendly with him, and he, in return, at once caressed every dog that came near him. But he never had a dog as a pet. He melted immediately with children, and they took to him without hesitation. He was always completely at ease with them, and would play undignified games with a blissful lack of embarrassment. He won the liking of children who were strange to him just as readily as he held the affection, for example, of his brother Paul's children. He made friends with Princess Elizabeth when she was only four. When staying at Balmoral with King George VI, then Duke of York, he played with her so engagingly that she soon reached the stage of addressing him as "Georgie". The Duchess remonstrated, and said, "You must say Uncle George". A few minutes later Princess Elizabeth again called the King "Georgie", and again the Duchess reproved her. "But I like him," replied Elizabeth with the candidness of her age, "and I'm going to call him Georgie."

But to adults, King George seldom exposed his gentler qualities. He neither asked for affection nor expected it. He was well aware that he did not inspire it. It was in his character to arouse loyalty rather than affection, yet those who were permitted to know him well found many likeable attributes hidden under his normal mask of reticence and self-repression. Among his friends he showed a ready sympathy, and in his palmier days never forgot the companions of his misfortunes. He was, indeed, sometimes criticised for his strong personal loyalties. He was kind, but often hesitated to expose it in case it was mistaken for weakness. He was thoughtful, sensitive and considerate to others, to his hosts and his guests, and to those who lived and worked close to him. He disliked extravagance and although he would not buy lavish presents, he would go to a great deal of trouble to choose something suitable, even though modest. For example, when he was leaving London for the last time he asked about the interests of all those to whom he intended making gifts. Learning that one of the British police officers guarding him was interested in old inn-signs, the King searched in shop after shop until he found exactly the book that the man would most prize. He was similarly thoughtful about tipping, and when leaving an hotel would make sure that all members of the staff who had given him service, including those, such as telephone girls, who are usually overlooked, duly received their presents.

One of King George's most valued social qualities was a wonderful memory for people, their names and backgrounds. This memory extended even to casual contacts, so that he might walk into a tobacconist's shop after several weeks' absence and ask an assistant how he was progressing with his allotment, or whether his son had passed his examination. He showed real concern and interest in the welfare of those who served him in subordinate status. He would talk to them and find out about their private lives, and would sometimes help them with practical advice. For the King was very well informed on a wide range of subjects, obscure as well as everyday. He was by temperament a student, and always took a shrewd interest

in his surroundings. When he met an interesting person, an expert in his subject, he would set out to question him, absorb all he was told, and impress it in his memory. To such sources he added an immense retention of information culled from voracious reading. He could speak with the authority of an expert on subjects of which his knowledge was chiefly theoretical. For example, in the task of replanting the burnt and destroyed Tatoi forests he showed almost as intimate a knowledge of forestry as the expert employed to supervise the work. The hobbies on which he concentrated an expert knowledge were old English furniture and silver.

The King's character was greatly influenced and mellowed by his long residence in Britain. His first months of exile after 1924 were spent with his wife, Queen Elizabeth, in her home in Bucharest, but his diligent temperament could not endure an existence, rich and comfortable though it was, that appeared to promise only lifelong idleness. He felt that it was in London that his interests, and those of his country, could best be served. On the other hand, his wife did not enjoy the English way of life. He came to England, accompanied by Levidis, glad perhaps to be away from the show and ceremony of the Roumanian Court, and spent some time enjoying the unaccustomed freedom that London offered him. Then he settled down to an inconspicuous life, making many friends, but carefully refraining from political or any other activity that would embarrass the British Court or Government. With the British Royal Family he was a regular visitor. For some time he followed the routine of staying with his wife in Bucharest for six months of each year, but in 1932 decided to live entirely in England. The unrealities of such an existence could not persist indefinitely, and in 1935 Queen Elizabeth obtained a divorce on the grounds of desertion.

Although King George always held a deep affection for Greece, it was in England that he found a degree of inner contentment that his own country denied him. During his long first exile sheer lack of income impelled him to taste and enjoy the simpler pleasures of life in London. He knew Chelsea and Whitechapel, and quiet old "pubs"

in secluded squares, just as he knew also the smarter rendezvous of Mayfair. He liked to browse round the shops alone doing his personal shopping. He liked to join close friends in unpretentious little parties where he felt free to talk without somebody placing political implications on his slightest utterings. He passed easily as an Englishman. Indeed, it was only because his English was sometimes more correct and formal than the average Englishman's that he exposed himself as a foreigner.

Much of his time was spent in the country, visiting friends. He was a good shot, and was fond of shooting, especially in Scotland. In later years he went to India as a guest of the Viceroy and the Indian Princes, by whom he was given an exciting round of big-game hunting. By the Princes he was received with the formal respect due to a monarch, a striking change from the lukewarm attitude sometimes adopted towards him by certain ornaments of London society. For as his first spell of banishment lengthened, and Greece appeared to be settling down to a permanent condition of republicanism, so certain fashionable doors that had once been open to him began discreetly to close. King George observed and remembered these indications of friable friendship.

In his second exile, after his return from America in 1942, King George again observed how social notabilities who had invited him eagerly as a hero began again to lose their enthusiasm when the dramatic events of 1943 and 1944 seemed to indicate to the uninstructed observer that the days of the monarchy were over. Although sensitive to such manœuvrings, he dismissed them from his mind as of no importance. He did not even descend to contempt when, after the March elections indicated his probable resumption of the throne, these same fashionable circles again sent him their invitations. But he took care not to accept them. He was not deluded either, during this period, by certain people who, while decrying the monarchy in Greece, sought the snob satisfaction of being seen in his company at Claridges or other public places.

Except for his visits to Cairo, and some brief trips to the country, King George lived in London throughout the

bombings and the later perils of the "V" weapons. He liked and admired the ordinary people, with their quiet courage and common-sense attitude to life. Although his affection for Greece did not lessen, his regard for England developed because he found among the English a way of life in keeping with his own solid, tolerant outlook. He became not merely an Anglophil but an Anglo-maniac. His esteem for England withstood both the personal animosity with which he was attacked in private and public, and the high-handed treatment meted out to him officially. He could even take an understanding view of these official actions, and had little patience with those who asked him how he could love a country that treated him so badly.

The British type that he did not like was the one imbued with what Hitler called "the governess mind", that aimed to interfere in the domestic affairs of foreign countries, especially of Greece, that adopted a superior attitude to the "natives", that made no allowances for the multitudinous difficulties of a small poverty-ridden country, that judged outward well-being by British standards of living, but that could never see the social and political anomalies of their own country. Such people did not always confine themselves to political matters, but also tried to interfere in the King's personal life. One British woman, for example, known for her live dislike of the Greek Monarch, went so far as to ask a close friend of the King to use her influence to get him to attend Divine Service more frequently!

In spite of the self-restraint that made him sometimes a difficult man to understand, even by his friends and intimates, the sterling qualities in his character, especially his consideration and humanity, enabled him to hold the regard and loyalty of members of his entourage and staff over long years of fluctuating fortune. His valet, Pantelos, for example, once one of his Evzone guards, served him faithfully for thirty-five years.

The man who was closest to King George for a period of twenty-five years was Brigadier Dimitri Levidis, more generally known by his former rank of Colonel. His long devotion to the King makes a story in itself. Originally

meant for law, Levidis obtained his degree at Athens University. After fighting as a second-lieutenant of the Reserve in the 1912-13 Balkan Wars, he decided to become a regular officer. He was serving in the 1st Infantry Regiment in Athens when Crown Prince George was appointed as a Captain, and Levidis became his adjutant. Levidis carried out normal Army duties between the years 1914 and 1917 until, when King Constantine was about to go into exile, the Crown Prince sent for him, explained that he was leaving Greece with his father, and asked if Levidis would like to accompany him as equerry. Levidis agreed, and King Constantine's signature approving the appointment was one of his last acts as King. Since that day Levidis stayed by the side of King George throughout all his vicissitudes, until his death.

During their first long exile Levidis became as strong an Anglophil as the King. In England he was called an “honorary Londoner”, and regarded himself as one. He developed decided views about the benefits that would accrue to Greece if her schools could inculcate the same team spirit, the subordination of self to the interests of the side, that British schools instil into the British character, but which the Greek character so noticeably fails to acquire.

In 1941 Levidis accompanied the King in his escapes from Greece and Crete, leaving his wife behind in their newly built home near the Kallini Wireless Station. The house was taken by the Germans during the occupation, but they gave Madame Levidis a wing to live in, and here, a few months after her husband had gone, a boy was born. Levidis did not see his son until he returned to Greece with the King five years later. Levidis's house, planned in the Spanish style, was contrived to fit among a group of cypress trees on a hill near Athens, not far from the beaches of Porto Rafti and Raffini, from which British troops were evacuated in April, 1941. The house was built cleverly to avoid cutting down the precious trees, several of which touch the walls. Delightfully situated, the terrace looks southwards towards Mount Hymettos, and eastwards to the Bay of Marathon. While the building was in progress in 1939, Princess Katherine took a great interest in the work,

and admired the house. Levidis jokingly promised her that when she married she should spend her honeymoon there. Eight years later, when she made her romantic marriage to Major Brandram, their honeymoon was duly spent at the Levidis house.

King George, an undemonstrative man, realised well the value of Levidis's service, but postponed always the moment of formal recognition. The day after King George's death, Levidis, still unable to realise that his life association was broken, was sent for by King Paul. The new King said that in going through the drawers of his brother's desk he had found an Order of the Grand Cross of St. George and Constantine, the personal Order of the Greek Royal Family, and never previously given, in the highest class, to a Greek citizen. The King said he knew his brother had intended it for Levidis, whom he there and then invested with the Order in recognition of his long service to the family.

CHAPTER XV

“THE FIRST DEMOCRAT OF GREECE”

Just before six o'clock in the morning of a July day in 1947 I stood in the foyer of the Hotel Grande Bretagne in Athens. At this hour the streets outside were empty except for a few workers tidying up the pavements. At six o'clock precisely a Ford convertible, coach-built in the manner of a shooting-brake, pulled up outside the entrance. I went towards it, and was given a cheerful greeting by the driver. He was King Paul I of Greece, wearing shorts and shirt and sun-glasses, but no hat. I sat in the seat beside him, his private secretary, Wing-Commander Potamianos, joining the chauffeur in the rear seat.

Waiting some twenty yards behind was a second car, a saloon containing four men of the security police. The two cars started out at once on the road to Elefsis. Away from the centre of the city the number of people increased and there was a steady procession of carts and cars bringing produce to the markets. Buses met us full of workers leaving their suburban homes for work in the centre of the capital. The King drove with the sure confidence of skill and experience, and although I knew he had the reputation, like his nephew King Michael of Roumania, of being a fast driver, it was only when we reached the open road that he let the car show her paces.

I was travelling with the King at this early hour in fulfilment of a promise that he had made a few days before, over a whisky at the Athens Yacht Club overlooking Phaleron Bay. An enthusiastic yachtsman, King Paul, accompanied by Potamianos, had taken part in races around the Bay. I had just arrived in Athens, with the express purpose of obtaining material for this book, and whilst King Paul was sailing I sat and spoke for some time with Her Majesty Queen Frederica. It was she who told me of the King's

interest in the work of the National Institute, and of the way in which he had given a practical lead to one of the organisation's activities by working with the Athens students helping to repair the roads. When he returned, the King told me that he had arranged to pay another visit to one of these road-repair groups, and invited me to accompany him, but this time, he reassured me, not to work seriously. He held out his hands to show me the scars of the blisters that his labours had gained him on the previous visit.

We passed the famous old church at Daphni, then on past the flying-boat base at Scaramanga and the entrance to the airfield at Elefsis—all reminders to me of brief but exciting days of 1941. Then we arrived at the village of Mandra, beyond which the main road forked southwards for Corinth. As the car passed slowly down the main street, people stood at their doors and clapped their hands enthusiastically with broad, delighted grins. Mandra was one of the places where the E.L.A.S. forces retreating from Athens in January, 1945, had callously shot many of the pitiful old people seized as hostages, when they showed themselves too feeble to walk any farther. The villagers seemed to have forgotten this grim episode of the past, and their concern now was to show the King how pleased they were to see him on this informal visit. They knew why he was there, because the road gangs were working just past the village.

As we moved along we saw groups of these young men already at work, all wearing shorts, many without shirts, and all looking brown and very fit. They, too, recognised the car, stopped their work and waved a cheerful welcome. Eventually we passed the last group and arrived at their camp lying among olive groves at the top of a hill by a small church. The youngsters lived in American-pattern tents among the trees, and, accompanied by the students whose turn it was to undertake orderly duties, we looked in several of them, all neat and tidy. The priest came to greet the King, who led the way to inspect the kitchen erected in a building behind the church.

When we walked back towards the men working on the road, the King was greeted with obvious friendliness and

smiles of pleasure by each one of them. Standing head and shoulders above the rest of us, the King's massive frame dominated everybody, and even his very informal attire did not deprive him of his personal distinction and authority. But his manner was cordial, direct and unassuming, so that between him and those to whom he spoke there was not the slightest sign of stiffness or embarrassment. The King knew many of the young workers by name, and discussed with them not only their present labours, but also the progress of their studies. As we passed from group to group I noticed how every youngster saluted the King with the simple words, *Kali mera* (“Good morning”). A few said, *Kali mera sas*, which means “Good morning to you”, but nobody bowed, nobody used any word of address, such as “Your Majesty”, nor any word equivalent to the “sir” that a Britisher would have employed in such a meeting, and that I myself felt impelled to use when addressing the King. There is in fact no word in Greek that serves the same purpose as the English “sir”, when employed in this way to express respect and deference.

As we moved to the outskirts of Mandra we were welcomed by the villagers and many children. A little girl of four or five confidently handed the King a few flowers, plucked from the roadside. He smiled as he patted her head for her appropriate offering, for they were the wild flowers, *Vasilikos*, which means “Royal”—the peasant's gift to his King. The villagers to whom the King spoke greeted him in exactly the same courteous, friendly manner as the students had done. I could not but reflect on the way these informal encounters symbolised the attitude of the Greeks towards their Monarch. They like him, they respect him, they honour him, but they have no way of showing or expressing the thought that he is to be treated differently from the way they treat each other. And the King knows this, responds to their attitude, and is received as one of them. Thus can the Greek reconcile his strong sense of individualism and democracy with devotion to the King in whose person he recognises the unity of the State and the Race.

Whilst King Paul was chatting with the workers, I talked to two or three who spoke English or French, and asked why they had engaged themselves in such work during their free time. Their replies differed, but basically struck the same note—that they wanted to be of service to their country. They said this in a way that suggested the idea was something a little abnormal and newly discovered, which came strangely from a people who had shown such stupendous self-sacrifice in resisting the Italian and German enemy in 1940/41. But there was, of course, a difference between self-sacrifice and service. To fight and die for the defence of one's country was a duty easily accepted by all Greeks, but to labour in peace-time, voluntarily and without payment, on work that brought no personal profit, that was of benefit only to the general community, was something not so widespread and understood in Greece as it is in other countries, such as Britain and America.

For a time King Paul took up a shovel and worked with one of the squads whilst I took photographs of him. The others showed no particular interest at this demonstration, because they had seen the King as navvy before. The photograph opposite page 224 shows him thus occupied, with myself also engaged in these unaccustomed duties.

As we resumed our seats in the car ready to return, an old woman approached the King and eagerly asked a favour. As I was to witness later, it is a privilege possessed by all Greeks that they shall have personal access to their King and Queen if they wish to state a grievance. This woman wanted her son back from the Army because her fields were not being tilled. Patiently King Paul explained to her that her son, like many thousands of other Greek sons, was defending the soil of Greece against the enemies that still threatened from the mountains. Quietened, but only half-satisfied, she drew back, while I took her photograph.

"They can't understand," explained King Paul as we drove off, "why their men should be away now that the war is over. They don't realise how much effort we have to put into trying to protect the northern communities from

the guerillas. It is Greece's tragedy that there are still thousands of men fighting instead of tilling fields, and it is not only in the fields that there is so much work waiting to be done. There is still much poverty and despair, and people are losing their spirit because their miseries never end, and no help comes to ease their burden. There are many things that the Government of a poor country cannot do, and that is one of the reasons why I have introduced the National Institute and am trying to spread its ideals and purpose throughout Greece.”

In his interest in the National Institute is to be found the clue to the King's attitude to the reconstruction of Greece. This view he explained clearly in his speech at the first official meeting of the Institute's Board in May, 1947. After declaring that the help given to Greece by Britain and America for reconstruction could be accepted by Greeks with a clear conscience as a just recognition of the country's endeavours, he pointed out that more was required than material rehabilitation. Greeks needed spiritual rehabilitation also, and this must come from within. The problem would be solved only when everybody in Greece clearly understood the meaning and obligations of citizenship. Greece can claim to be free only when each individual respects the rights of each of his fellows to enjoy freedom. The purpose of the Institute, the King continued, was to help, by practical example and endeavour, to educate the nation to the idea of individual service for the community, and so to the toleration and unselfishness among free men that will replace the old ambitions for personal power that caused Greece so much suffering in the past.

The King plays an active part in the work of the Institute, both as its President and driving force, and as a participant in its work. Its declared aims are to raise the moral, cultural, social and living standards of the Greek people. It is run entirely on a voluntary basis, its working expenses being met by donations from all classes at home and abroad, the King among them. It operates in close contact with the various Ministries that its activities concern, and often serves as a spur to their zeal. And its work is

entirely free from politics. Under the direction of various committees, it provides libraries, cheap books, lectures and other educational aids. It is establishing instructional centres for agriculture, afforestation, and the small industries. It is initiating measures for rebuilding destroyed towns, and holds competitions for architectural ideas in town planning. It organises students and others in social welfare and similar exertions, such as the road-repairing groups that I had seen in action.

Behind all these labours to develop a sense of service is the need that King Paul discerns to heal the wounds inflicted on the spirit and soul of Greece. For this is one of the country's greatest sicknesses, and it is one that religion alone cannot cure. As the King said, the people's miseries and trials seem never to end. The close of the war, which should have brought peace and confidence, brought only fresh terrors and distrusting. Throughout the country, years of oppression and starvation, of murder and massacre, led to a halo of heroism being placed on all the perfidious underground things—the sly deceptions, the double-dealings, the spyings, the treacheries—that were previously regarded as base and shameful. Years of such living have distorted fundamental standards of conduct and morals. It is this sickness also that must be cured from within, and the King declares that it is the task of those who have not suffered such injury to help straighten out those who have. And he has himself assumed the leadership of this drive to rehabilitate the intangible things of the spirit as firmly as he assumed the leadership of the national effort to rebuild material prosperity.

It was indeed fortunate for Greece that, at the critical juncture a few months after the return of the monarchy, when British aid was replaced by American, there should stand ready to take King George's place a man in the prime of his life and of almost equal experience and maturity. There was no break in the running of Government, and none of the difficulties that might have arisen had Paul been young or implicated with some political group. Instead, his long record of endeavour in Greek politics is a model of impeccable detachment and neutrality. Ever since King



King Paul with a squad of volunteer road-menders.

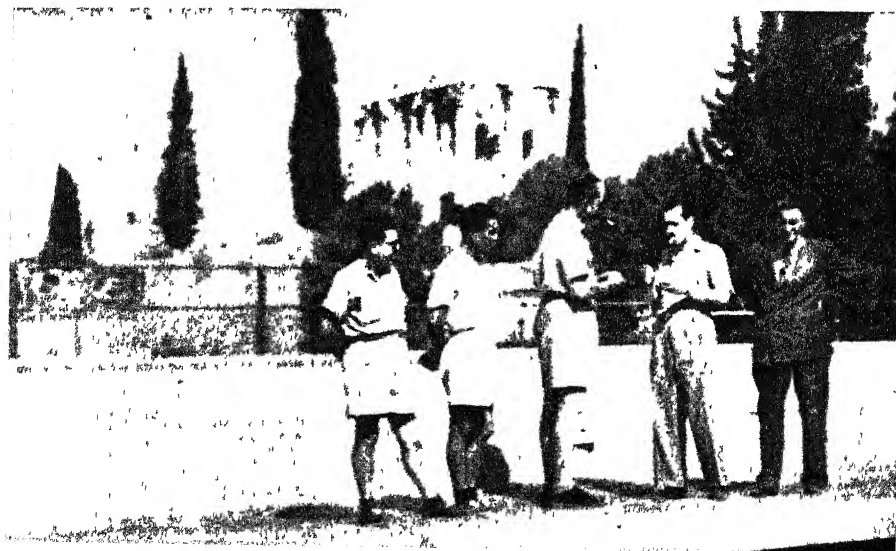


The King takes a hand at road mending



The old lady appeals to her King

King Paul and the Author by the Athens Swimming Pool



George returned to Greece in 1935, Prince Paul prepared himself for the responsibility that must one day fall upon his shoulders, for he knew that his brother had renounced the idea of forming a second alliance that might produce an heir. Both in exile and in Greece he has had before him the prospect of eventually ascending the throne. The prudence that impelled him to refuse Venizelos's offer of the Crown twenty-seven years earlier led him to follow a subsequent course of conduct that has left him untouched by any of the shadows that King George's opponents would never forget, particularly his association with Metaxas.

Thus, while close to the centre of political events, he had usually not participated in them sufficiently to be identified with their consequences, good or bad. But while not bearing the burden of responsibility, he had been given the chance to become wise in vicarious experience, as well as in his own. Throughout this long period as the heir-successor, he had kept always in the background, seemingly only a discreet watcher, and quietly accepting his place as his duty. That this is the office to which every dutiful heir or brother to the King must accustom himself is symbolised in the photograph opposite page 92, where both Prince Paul and the Duke of Kent, King George VI's youngest brother, held similar roles. Although Prince Paul, with his realistic outlook, did not invariably see eye to eye with his brother, he remained always the King's most loyal subject. And although King George, with his tendency to introspection, did not invariably communicate his inmost thoughts and motives, Prince Paul was second only to his brother in knowledge of State affairs.

Just as there was no party in the country, except the Communists, with ready-made grievances against the new King that derived from the past, so King Paul himself was not affected or prejudiced by deep feelings of resentment for past actions against his own person. Certainly he could not fail to remember the treatment extended to his father and his uncle, Prince Andrew, and he knew better than anyone how unjustly his brother had been treated. But he himself had escaped the personal humiliations that leave

so deep an impress, however strong may be the desire to forget. Moreover, long years of sharing in the vicissitudes of his family, first as a helpless boy and then as an impotent onlooker, had imposed on him an appreciation of the virtues of a philosophical outlook. It is not without significance that to-day King Paul is a student of the teachings of the world's philosophers, for from their guidance he no doubt draws much of the capacity he shows to contemplate his country's day-to-day political fluctuations and set them dispassionately against the perspective of the past and the future.

Certainly King Paul's life has been one that must have turned any man into either a philosopher or a rebel. He was old enough to appreciate the adversity that came upon his family after the outbreak of the 1914 war, adversity that contrasted so strongly with the happy, carefree days before. He remembered the burning of the Tatoi forests, his own narrow escape with his father, the lost lives of the A.D.C. and other Court officials. He remembered the street-fighting in Athens, the bombardment, the sudden thrusting into exile, the unhappy life in Swiss hotels, the despair of his mother over the death of his brother Alexander. Then the unexpected return to Greece in a blaze of glory, to be so soon followed by the second ordeal, the broken spirit of his father and mother, their death in Italy. And then his own long life of adult exile, starting in 1924, when he accompanied King George and Queen Elizabeth to Roumania, and lived with his sister, Princess Helen. To this day he remembers the impression made on him by the contrast between the simple, unpretentious Greek Court and the richness and pageantry of the Roumanian Court, with its magnificent palaces and large estates scattered about the country.

After nine months of idleness, he went to England, where, because he had very little money, and because there appeared to be no future for his family in Greece, he concluded he would have to learn a profession. He decided to study aero-engine manufacture, and entered the Armstrong-Whitworth factory at Coventry, assuming the name of Beck, and working for some time without his real

identity being discovered. He lived at Leamington, travelling to the works each day in a small Morris-Cowley car. He spent three months in the engine assembly shops, three months on airfield work, and another three months on factory organisation and administration.

Then an opportunity arose for him to go to the United States with the possibility of good business prospects, but these petered out, and for the next few years he spent his time in travel and in visiting various relations and friends. One of these visits was to the Duke of Brunswick's castle in Austria, where the ten-year-old Frederica took a great fancy to him, romped with him and ruffled his hair. The twenty-five-year-old Prince did not forget Frederica. Throughout his travels his base remained always Britain, which, like his brother George, he learned to regard as his second home, and where he made many good friends, some of whom enabled him to indulge in his passion for yachting, the sport in which he had excelled from boyhood.

On one of these trips he displayed something of the spirit of adventure that he has had to suppress throughout most of his life, but that occasionally shows even to-day in his outlook and conversation. In 1930, a friend, Freddy Wessel, invited him to join a trip in his sixty-foot cruiser yacht to the Mediterranean, including the Aegean, where he proposed to visit the Islands. At this time, it will be remembered, Greece was a Republic. All the members of the Royal Family had been exiled and forbidden entry to the country. Their private properties had been confiscated. Prince Paul then had a Danish passport, but in order to avoid any possible difficulties in Greek ports, he hid his identity further by signing on as a member of Wessel's crew, and as an additional precaution grew a large black beard. The ship visited several Greek islands without incident, and arriving at Piraeus, Prince Paul took the risk of going ashore. Once on Greek soil his thoughts flew immediately to his boyhood home—Tatoi. He could not resist the desire to see it once more.

He and Wessel and Mrs. Wessel thereupon took a taxi and drove out to Tatoi. They had not been long on the road when the taxi-driver, obviously intrigued with his

bearded passenger, asked whether they had met before. He was told that this was impossible, and continued driving in silence, but still taking a great interest in Prince Paul, clearly certain that some chord in his memory had been stirred. Arrived at the gates to Tatoi Palace, they were forbidden to enter by a sentry, as the house was occupied by the Prime Minister of the Government then in power. Even now King Paul can smile at the ironical situation of a prince in exile, disguised, standing forlornly outside the entrance of the Palace which was his family's private property.

The taxi-driver's suspicions were intensified by the interest his fares had taken in the Palace, and as they drove back to Athens, he persisted in his questioning in spite of their efforts to divert his attention into other channels. Finally, as they approached the harbour, he suddenly declared he had remembered. He knew by the voice and walk that the supposed sailor was really Prince Paul, whom he had seen scores of times. "What! that fellow!" cried Paul. "And do you think he could grow a beard like this? Don't talk nonsense!" Still dubious, the man took his fare, and watched them go aboard. The yacht left harbour immediately, before he had time to talk about his suspicions.

They continued the tour around the Aegean, and in visiting one of the Islands, Prince Paul came face to face with a naval officer whom he had known very well in the past. The officer stopped, stared intently at the bearded sailor and his companions, hesitated, then passed them without speaking. Prince Paul thought that he had not been recognised, but years later, when he returned to Greece and was married, the Crown Princess was told of the incident by the officer's wife. He had come home looking very worried, and when she asked what was troubling him, he said he had just seen Prince Paul, and was anxious lest he should be recognised and arrested. But nobody else had noticed him, and the trip was completed without further incident.

At length the period of exile finished, and Prince Paul returned to Athens when King George was recalled in 1935. The photograph opposite page 65 shows him

walking in the streets of Athens with Colonel Levidis a few hours after the official return, with excited gendarmes unable to decide whether he needed protection against the pleased and inquisitive crowds. Once settled down in Greece, Prince Paul occupied himself with his old love, the Navy, which had retained his live affection since the days before his father's exile, when he had graduated at the Greek Naval Academy, and served for a time on sea-going duties.

He also interested himself in social and welfare work such as the Boy Scout movement, of which he became the President. He had seen the good work done by the organisation in England, and believed that similar benefits might follow in Greece. But Metaxas, wishing to develop a Youth Movement on the lines of the German organisation, dissolved the Scouts against Paul's wishes and introduced the new system. Although Prince Paul was designated as its head, he disapproved of the change, and took but little active part in the movement.

Prince Paul did not get on well with Metaxas, partly because of this and other interferences with his own special interests, and partly because he was out of tune with many of the Prime Minister's ideas. Nevertheless, he gave Metaxas full credit for his work in pulling Greece from the mire into which she had fallen, and especially for his share in the regeneration of the fighting services. As we know, the King himself paid the deepest practical attention to these reforms, and Prince Paul gave his brother every possible support, particularly in the task of reorganising the Navy. He also turned his interest to the Air Force, and learned to fly in 1936. His instructor was Wing-Commander Potamianos, who in the photograph opposite page 65 is shown with his pupil in flying-kit at Menidi airfield.

An exceptionally apt pupil, Prince Paul never needed to be told a point twice, and showed consistently good judgment in both flying and landing. He went through the normal training syllabus, using an Avro Tutor and a 626. Metaxas told Potamianos that the Crown Prince was never to be considered sufficiently efficient to fly alone, but he showed such skill and confidence that the young officer

braved displeasure and sent his pupil on a successful first solo. On completing the syllabus Prince Paul was examined, in the normal routine, by a board of senior Air Force officers, before being granted his wings. They expected to be given an inexperienced display as a formality, with Potamianos flying in the instructor's seat in case of accident. They watched the set tests, the forced-landing practice and the aerobatics, and were admiring what they imagined to be the instructor's inverted flying when they suddenly discovered Potamianos standing meekly behind them. He had to listen to some vigorous and painful observations on his indiscretion, but his pupil was given his wings without hesitation!

Prince Paul spent much of his spare time in following his favourite pastime of yachting, and introduced a number of British-built sailing-boats, with which he gained several trophies in the contests held by the Athens Yacht Club. He was also active in developing mountain climbing, becoming President of the Alpine Club and taking part in some of the most difficult climbs the country offered. A keen tennis-player, he became a regular and skilled supporter of the Athens Tennis Club, near the Stadium. During my visit to Athens he showed me round the grounds, where he was cheerfully and affectionately greeted by the professionals and groundsmen, and then took me to see the swimming-pool, built to Olympic Games standard. King Paul is pleased to have had a share in the planning of the pool, which lies in the curving bed of the stream Ilissos where Sophocles was wont to wash his feet. The stream was diverted for this express purpose. The photograph opposite page 225 shows King Paul and the author lighting cigarettes by the side of the water, with the Acropolis and the Pillars of Jupiter in the background.

Flying, sport and his work with the Navy were not Prince Paul's only interests after his return to Greece, and they had not caused him to neglect the lively young Princess who had intrigued him when she was a child, and whom he had seen frequently since. They had met several times at her home, and also at the Florence home of Queen Helen of Roumania. A strong attachment had developed, and

eventually Prince Paul asked the Duke of Brunswick for his daughter's hand. But the Duke considered Princess Frederica still too young, and so the romance had to wait until 1937, when she reached her twentieth year, and the Duke agreed to an engagement.

The wedding took place in January, 1938, the magnificent ritual of the Greek Church lending itself to an impressive ceremony, as the photograph opposite page 52 indicates. Among the relations and friends present at the wedding, additional to Prince Paul's brothers and sisters and the bride's parents and four brothers, were: King Michael of Roumania and Queen Helen, the bride's uncle Prince Augustus William of Prussia, Prince and Princess Paul of Yugoslavia, the Duke and Duchess of Kent, Prince and Princess George of Greece, and Prince and Princess Christopher. Prince Paul's best men were King Michael, then aged sixteen, and the Princes Peter and Philip of Greece.

The wedding was made the occasion of national celebration throughout Greece. Presents poured in from friends and Greek communities throughout the world. Among the many gifts made by individuals and organisations in Greece, the one that the Royal Couple probably appreciated the most was a gift of money contributed in small amounts by thousands of the poorer people of Thrace and North-Eastern Greece, with which they hoped the Crown Prince would buy an aeroplane. There were difficulties about this course, however, and so the money went to buy a yacht, in which the Prince and Princess afterwards spent many hours cruising around the Greek coasts.

But this period of bliss did not last long, for the Nazi and Fascist menaces were growing. Prince Paul became increasingly absorbed in the work of helping to prepare for the war which all Greeks now realised they would be fortunate to escape. But they did not escape. The Italian attack came, and Prince Paul divided his time between visiting units in the line and standing behind his brother in the ever-growing volume of responsibilities in Athens. His part was, as always, a self-effacing one, of

loyal support and help to the King. He had no opportunity to play so important a role as his brother, who indeed tended more and more to take entire responsibility for his decisions. Then came the German attack, the escape to Crete, the flight to Egypt, and the journey to South Africa with the two children, Princess Sophie and Prince Constantine. In South Africa developed the friendship with General Smuts that has persisted to this day.

Prince Paul, as already described, divided his time between South Africa, England and Egypt, devoting more and more of his attention to the Middle East as the political situation became progressively worse. As soon as he saw that the resistance movement in his country was passing under the control of the Communist-directed E.A.M., and that the non-Communist guerillas were suffering from lack of a leader able to inspire the support of men of moderate political opinion, he offered to go to Greece to organise and head the resistance. His first efforts, made in 1943 to General Wilson in Cairo, were not welcomed, and although General Smuts was in favour of his making the attempt, he suffered several rebuffs for his persistence in trying to persuade the British authorities to allow him to go. Had he been permitted to enter Greece in the early stages of the resistance, before E.A.M. had consolidated its authority by means of the nation-wide grip exerted by the E.L.A.S. forces, he might well have unified all the resistance movements, except those directly under Communist influence. But he was given no encouragement in Cairo, and so went to Italy, where, in a meeting with the Resident Minister and Commander-in-Chief, his proposals were dismissed as being likely to provoke the Communists into civil war. He still persisted in his efforts, but the situation in Greece degenerated rapidly, and eventually, after seeing Mr. Eden in Cairo on his way back from Teheran, Prince Paul realised that the opportunity had passed.

Later in Cairo in December, 1944, when King George and the members of the Royal Family were debarred from returning to Greece with the liberating British forces, Prince Paul again attempted to return. King George had

reacted to the British decision with deep disappointment and dejection, but he accepted it without argument, and returned to London. But Prince Paul, although no less disappointed, was at first in no mood to bow unquestioningly to the British view. On leaving Egypt, King George left Prince Paul with authority to act as his Regent, in so far as concerned Greek interests in the Middle East. Both the Crown Prince and his brother were convinced that the troubles in Greece continued partly because of the lack of a rallying point for the non-Communist elements, and Prince Paul still felt that his presence in the country might be a signal for the Greek people to show their true feelings. He therefore searched for some means of getting back to Greece without British aid, even to the extent of considering piloting an aeroplane there, but the difficulty was to get possession of a suitable plane. He also planned to make the journey hidden in a Greek destroyer, and two well-known Greek naval officers agreed to help, but their plans came to nothing, as their own ships did not go to Greece. In the end Prince Paul resigned himself to the inevitable, and, like his brother in London, watched impotently while Greece tottered on the edge of anarchy, and Greek patriots were slaughtered by the thousand, all as a sacrifice to the trumpeting of pro-Communist elements in Britain and America.

Eventually the day came when, after the election and the subsequent plebiscite, Prince Paul and Princess Frederica sailed from Egypt in a Greek destroyer to meet King George after his air journey from London. The children came to Greece later, and the photograph opposite page 124 shows them satisfying a sea voyage appetite aboard the Greek vessel in which they travelled. After the first days of enthusiastic reception, the Crown Prince and Princess settled into their unpretentious house at Psychico, and began to take their share in the tremendous work of reconstruction that awaited them. Then came the sudden death of King George, just at the important moment when the puissant United States completely reversed her attitude of 1944. A new chapter had opened in the history of Greece. In the sense of drama at the King

passing from the troubled scene just when American action promised a new hope lay the feeling that with the accession of the new King, free from the damaging enmities of the past, a new chapter had opened also in the history of the monarchy.

King Paul pronounced the oath of fidelity to the Constitution with a solemn recognition of the responsibilities to which he had succeeded. The impact of his personality was felt at once in Greek affairs. From his subordinate role he emerged into the sudden limelight, to reveal unsuspected qualities of leadership and long-headedness. The contrast with King George was emphasised by the difference of physique, in which King Paul resembles his father, King Constantine, as he does also, in some degree, in character. Where King George was close, restrictive, slow to act, King Paul was open to suggestion, demanding positive action, ready to inspire it himself. He seemed perhaps more human, tolerant, and responsive, probably because he was married and blessed with a family and the happy home life that Fate denied to his brother.

But although ten years younger than King George, and with so different a temperament, King Paul possessed no less a sense of duty to Greece. He well realised the difficulties of the task of inspiring the nation to unity while never permitting himself to be drawn into the arena of political intrigue, as also of exercising the control conferred and indeed demanded by his prerogatives, while never overstepping the bounds of the Constitution. He knew that his father and brother had stumbled, partly because of certain uncompromising elements in their character, but more so from the manœuvrings of Greek statesmen. He knew, too, that ministers should remember there are actions a constitutional King should not be invited to take, and he was determined to keep their awareness alive. For some time after his succession, certain wily politicians did try to induce the King to non-constitutional action, but he blandly refused. Soon they realised that under his unceremonious, sometimes inconsequential air lay a shrewd, observant and understanding character.

Years of experience have taught King Paul to appreciate

that, to many Greeks, the intricate manœuvrings and rivalries of politics represent the equivalent of another country's national sport. He approaches the recurring problems of Government, as referred to him by his sometimes mettlesome Ministers, with the calm and patient detachment born of long acquaintance with the mercurial Greek character. Conciliatory but firm, the embodiment of solid common-sense, he gives the impression of an easy sureness of himself and his strength, tempered with a disarming sense of humour. During my visit to Athens I heard of an example of this quality. After one of the many political squabbles then progressing, the Premier informed the King that after hours of argument one of his leading supporters had offered his irrevocable resignation. “If you accept it, he'll never forgive you,” commented the King, and in these words showed his knowledge both of the Greek character and of human nature.

But for his sense of humour, the King's burden would perhaps become more than wearisome, for there are few directions in which he can turn without finding misery, poverty and failing courage. Yet his serene and cheerful air brings everywhere a feeling of confidence. He jokes with villagers as easily as with politicians, and loves a leg-pull even about serious affairs. When Queen Helen of Roumania visited Greece for Princess Katherine's wedding she was driven with a lady-in-waiting to visit Tatoi and other girlhood scenes that she had not known for eight years. She noticed that security police cars and outriders escorted her everywhere, and on her return to Athens spoke to her brother about them. “Why do you have so many police to look after me?” she asked. “Surely I'm not as important as that.” “I'm afraid you've mistaken the position,” replied the King gravely. “You see, I have to make sure you're not given any freedom to spread Communist doctrines in this country.” On so sensitive a matter Queen Helen's sense of humour momentarily failed to respond, but soon she joined in the laugh against herself.

In his daily round of duties the King works systematically, for he has much to do that cannot be delegated to others. He has a great deal of reading to get through, not

only routine State documents, but also Press and other summaries of world events. He keeps an unbroken watch on the pulse of political movements in his own country, and it was for this reason that he was obliged to refuse the invitation to visit London for the wedding of his cousin Philip to Princess Elizabeth. In his work he shows a quick grasp of essentials, readily picking out and rejecting the unimportant and worthless. And always he retains a sense of proportion and realism in considering the grave problems that beset his country and government.

The life of the King, as of the Queen, is regulated by the minimum amount of formality. They personally are almost completely free from the restrictive punctilio by which some royalties seek to uphold their prestige. Perhaps it is because both King Paul and Queen Frederica are descended from dynasties that have ruled for many centuries that they give an impression of an inward sense of birth and tradition that needs no outward show. Their manner is completely without suggestion of any assumption of regal dignity, and they talk in exactly the same natural manner with people of every walk of life. In this, and in the simplicity of their domestic and official life, they earn the approval of even the most sensitively democratic Greeks.

I heard many flattering things said about the King and Queen by those who know them well or work near to them. One very close to the throne said that both are unselfish in their outlook, and have no personal ambition other than to fulfil their Royal duties and serve Greece. I spoke with several well-known statesmen, all of whom expressed admiration for the manner in which the Royal couple were carrying out their task. Thinking that perhaps some of these people were giving me a one-sided picture, because of their personal or political leanings, I thought it reasonable to find the attitude of one who had never, in all his life, shown any inclination to look anywhere but leftwards towards anti-monarchism. This was none other than the octogenarian, Themistocles Sophoulis, leader of the Liberal Party, successor to Venizelos, and regarded throughout Greece as Republican No. 1.

"I became a Republican in my youth," he told me, "in

reaction to the extreme monarchism of my professor in a German university, and I have fought against monarchy ever since. At every election I have declared for a Republic. At the 1946 election I proclaimed my opposition to the return of King George, but when the results of the election and the subsequent plebiscite showed that the people wanted the King, I accepted their decision, and declared that the question of the regime was settled. But I could not stand wholeheartedly behind King George, because I could not forget his connection with the Metaxas dictatorship.

"But now I acknowledge," he continued, "that the new King and Queen have only one desire, which is to serve Greece. I have talked often with them both and watched them in their actions, and I give them my full support, for although I remain a Republican, I can still approve a constitutional monarchy. For when the King firmly observes the principles of democracy, the gap between a republic with an elected leader and a republic with an hereditary one becomes of no practical consequence. The King of the Hellenes, in order to obtain the adherence of all his subjects, must be the first democrat of Greece, and this is what King Paul has shown himself to be. As for the Queen, every day she is showing her desire to help Greece, just as she did when she was the Crown Princess."

M. Sophoulis went on to explain that he had been impressed with an unimportant, but to him significant habit of the King and Queen. In informal conversation about the King with a third party Queen Frederica always referred to "my husband", and never to "the King". Similarly, the King spoke always of "my wife", and never of "the Queen". "This simplicity in their attitude towards each other," said Sophoulis, "showed that they wished to be regarded in a way acceptable to all Greeks."

This father of Greek politicians, who a few weeks after this conversation again became Prime Minister, said he was sure the King and Queen possessed the affection and respect of the country. "King Constantine was loved by the Greek people," he said, "because he went out among them and showed them that he loved them. The present King

and Queen are doing the same and earning the same response. And the Queen is especially loved for her untiring work for those who have suffered so much in the country's troubles from 1941 to the present day."

The journeyings of the King and Queen have indeed done much to make their personalities known to the people of the provinces. One of their first acts after the accession was to tour Macedonia and Epirus, and inspect for themselves the areas that had suffered most from the activities of the Communist guerillas. The King showed his deep insight into the character of his people when he decided always to leave his car on the outskirts of all but the largest towns and enter them on foot. When she accompanies the King, the Queen walks with him. The King's height gives a symbolic advantage, for he usually towers above those who surround him.

In some of the larger towns the Communist influence was strong, and the King's advisers were often anxious about the risk of entering these possibly hostile centres. But the King and Queen insisted on meeting all the workers, whatever their politics. They sometimes needed all their resolution for this task. At Kavalla, for example, a centre of the tobacco-growing industry, where Communism still holds its grip, the King and Queen were received in stony silence when they entered a large shed in one of the factories where 2,000 women sat sorting out the tobacco leaves. Not a single one made any attempt to start the usual acclamation by handclapping. They had obviously been instructed to be awkward. Undeterred, the King and Queen went slowly round the building, addressing a few words to every one of the women. Gradually the wall of opposition crumbled before the King and Queen's persistence. Their task took them two hours, but when they left they were given an enthusiastic and emotional farewell. The chief forewoman of the workers, who was also one of the local Communist leaders, came to them as they were leaving. She stood before them with tears streaming down her face. "Majesties," she pleaded, "I beg you, save our children from what we have suffered."

Tribute is paid by all classes of the community to the

stabilising and inspiring influence that the visits of the King and Queen have produced throughout the country. In districts traditionally Royalist enthusiastic response could be expected, but in others, such as those among the mountains of Epirus, which in the past have shown a Republican trend, the response to the Royal presence has often been remarkable. Many of the centres that have suffered most from the occupation and the insurrection have shown the greatest degree of affection and loyalty. The little town of Kalambaka, for example, near to the famous hanging monasteries of Meteora, in the eastern folds of the Pindus Mountains, was razed to the ground by the Germans and afterwards suffered at the hands of the Andartes. The people here were living in apathy and despair, but the visit of the King and Queen gave them courage to press on with the rebuilding of their shattered town, which, at the King's recommendation, has been given priority in the programme of reconstruction, and which the inhabitants have insisted on re-naming “Paul's-town”.

It is such people as these—the simple indigenous people of Greece, politically inarticulate, and living always near to nature—who form the real backbone of the Greek nation. These are the Greeks who ask only to be allowed to live decently and in peace, and whom King George knew wished for his return. And King Paul, too, with the words of his family motto in his mind, realises that it is in the affection of such steadfast people as these—the people of the hamlets and the countryside—that the strength of the monarchy, as also of Greece, really lies. And that is why he and the Queen are determined to make themselves and all that they signify for the unity and prosperity of Greece known personally throughout the country, so that the occupants of the remotest villages shall feel as close to the protective security of the Crown as if they lived in the capital itself.

CHAPTER XVI

"A QUEEN . . . DESERVING OF OUR LOVE"

WHEN King George V of Hanover was driven from his throne by the Prussians in 1866, the family went first to Vienna and afterwards to the castle which the ex-King built at Gemunden in Austria. As explained in Chapter II, the King's eldest son resumed the old British title of Duke of Cumberland, and married Princess Thyra, sister of King George I of Greece. Members of the family never resigned themselves to the loss of their estate, and always maintained a bitterly anti-Prussian attitude. This dislike was directed also against the Prussian Royal House of Hohenzollern, whose conciliatory approaches were rejected. To such a degree was this feeling held that when travelling from Austria to visit their connections in Denmark, the Cumberlands would drive right across Germany without stepping out of their coaches, and later their motor-cars, in order not to set foot on German soil.

In 1912 the Duke's uncle died suddenly in Denmark, and his eldest son, George, was told to attend the funeral. The night before he left he had a vivid dream, which he recounted to his family over breakfast. He found himself, he said, watching his own funeral, and among the mourners were two Prussian officers. His brother laughed and told him he had nothing to worry about because Prussian officers were never likely to attend the funeral of one whose family feud with Prussia was so well known.

On his way to Denmark, Prince George crashed his car and was killed. Because he had died on German soil, the Kaiser Wilhelm sent two officers to the funeral to represent him, and also a body of troops of the Prussian Garde du Corps. In spite of their animosity for Prussia, the Duke and Duchess were not unnaturally appreciative of this gesture, and sent their second son, Prince Ernst



Queen Frederica and the Author in a State Airline Dakota.

The Queen at the pilot's controls.





An eager crowd hustles the Queen and her party

The Queen listens to the religious ceremony before opening the camp for orphan children



Auguste, to Berlin to thank Kaiser Wilhelm personally for the marks of respect paid to their dead son. Never forgetting his family's estrangement, the young Prince carried out his duty correctly, but stiffly. But among those he met at the Prussian Court was the Kaiser's daughter, Princess Victoria Louise. Prince Ernst was a very handsome young man, and the Princess fell instantly in love with him. The Prince, his hostile inhibitions forgotten, found himself returning her passion.

This unexpected development came as a great shock to the older members of the Hanover family, including Prince Ernst's parents. Unable so easily to forget their past injuries, they firmly resisted the proposed marriage, but the lovers were determined, and eventually the Duke and Duchess surrendered. The Prince renounced all claims to the throne of Hanover and was given the title of Duke of Brunswick. The marriage took place in May, 1913, and the union resulted in four sons, and a daughter, Princess Frederica Louise, who was born in 1917, and who, thirty years later, became the Queen of the Hellenes.

Although thus a Hohenzollern, the young Princess spent some of her most impressionable early days in England. In 1934 and 1935 she attended North Foreland Lodge Girls' School, near Broadstairs in Kent, and here she was head girl for five terms. Telling me of her memories of this school, the Queen recalled how surprised she had been that a foreign girl should be selected for such a post in an English school. A previous pupil at North Foreland Lodge had been Princess Katherine, a slight link that foreshadowed the stronger ties that were to exist between them a few years later.

Princess Frederica's engagement to Crown Prince Paul revived half-forgotten links between her family and Great Britain. A great-grandchild of Queen Victoria, the young Princess stood remotely in the line of succession to the British throne, and under the Royal Marriages Act of Britain, King George VI, as head of the House of Windsor, had to be asked for his consent to her marriage. This procedure was criticised by the Nazis as being an improper submission on the part of a German Princess. On her

marriage her official title was Princess of Hanover and of Great Britain and Ireland. The omission to amend the title in line with British political changes thus caused her to be designated a Princess of all Ireland, including the Irish Free State.

The marriage was especially welcomed by the Greeks because it gave hopes for the succession that King George's union had not fulfilled. The couple were soon blessed with children. The first child, Princess Sophie, was born in November, 1938, and the second, Prince Constantine, in June, 1940. The third child, Princess Irene, was born in Capetown in 1942. For her first baby the then Crown Princess obtained the services of a British nurse, Miss Macnair, who has remained with the family ever since. She was with the Princess in the party that escaped in a Sunderland flying-boat from Crete, as recounted in Chapter VII, and shared in all the family's experiences in exile in South Africa and Egypt.

While in Athens in 1947 I met the Royal children several times and was given opportunities to photograph them. All three children are natural in their ways, and behave with an uncertain blend of good manners and high spirits, like any happy and well-brought-up family. They are unspoilt, no doubt because they are treated by their parents and the ladies of the Court without a vestige of fuss or formality. Miss Mary Athenogenes, who was formerly lady-in-waiting to Princess Katherine, and who was then primarily responsible for the children's care, is regarded as though she were an elder sister, "Mary". Miss Macnair, who is "Nursie" to the children, and calls them Tino, Sophie and Irene, is obviously secure in their affection. English is the language normally used, and their tutor is British, but they are also at home in the Greek tongue.

Miss Athenogenes told the children that I was going to write a book about them, and they were at once intrigued. "About Mummy and Daddy as well?" asked Princess Sophie anxiously. "And Auntie Katherine, and Auntie Marina, and Uncle Peter?" continued Prince Constantine. I assured them that all their uncles and aunts and

cousins would be included, provided I was able to get some good photographs. Accompanied by Miss Athenogenes and Wing-Commander Potamianos, we went into the Palace garden, and passed down the tree-lined avenue to the lily-pond. We had brought a photograph album to help hold the children's attention, and I found it again intriguing to hear their references to their numerous relations. "Why, there's Michael!" exclaimed Constantine. "Doesn't he look funny in that big hat! That's the one I like of him, with Auntie Helen." "There's me with Auntie Katherine," pointed out Irene.

When I tried some other pictures away from the album they became a little self-conscious, and so Potamianos handled the camera while I engaged their interest by placing Princess Katherine's dachshund "Penny" in the lily-pond, much to its disgust. This was something they enjoyed, as is shown by the photographs opposite page 209, and the business of photography continued until a footman appeared with a message that the King and Queen were already seated for luncheon, and would we please hurry up!

Soon after King Paul succeeded to the throne he moved into the Palace from his house in Psychico. King George had communicated much of his lonely, ascetic spirit into the atmosphere of the Palace, and thus the arrival of the new King and Queen and their lively young family made a noticeable difference. "Now there is laughter in the corridors," said one of the Court officials to me in a telling phrase.

The way in which the children were informed of the death of King George, of whom they were all very fond, threw an illuminating light on the Queen's approach to such problems. She called them together and said that they would not be able to have tea with their uncle the next day, as had been arranged, because he had been called away. He had gone on a journey to Heaven, and would not be coming back, because God had decided that he should not be burdened with any more trouble. With this explanation the children accepted King George's absence as a quite normal affair, as was evidenced by Prince

Constantine's later explanation to Miss Athenogenes that "Uncle has gone to stay with God for always, but we mustn't be sorry, because he won't have any worries now".

The influence of the new regime is reflected in many ways in the daily life of the Palace, not least in the matter of the friendly social relations maintained with both Greek and foreign communities. The King and Queen are much more prone to hospitality than was King George, who, as already recounted, after his return to Greece had tended to restrict his contacts severely to official and semi-official occasions. Both participate in other preoccupations that King George had latterly denied himself. Both are interested in music, for example, and King Paul possesses considerable talent as a pianist. They both enjoy the outdoor life, and lose no opportunity of giving the children the healthy advantages of the sea and countryside. In the summer, when Athens is baked by a fiery sun, a large part of the population escapes to the hills around the city, or to the sea. The Palace in Athens was as stiflingly hot as anywhere else, and the King and Queen eagerly awaited the day when Tatoï would be made habitable again. Meanwhile, during the 1947 summer the whole family moved for week-ends to an island off the east coast, where they had a villa, and could enjoy a romp and bathe with the children in relative seclusion.

The impress of the Queen's character is felt not only in the Court and Household, but among most of the leaders of the community, not excepting crusted members of the political scene. Whereas King George's restrained character made it difficult for people to understand him and get near to him, Queen Frederica, like the King, inspires both response and affection. She has a radiant charm and an engaging directness of manner that breaks down the stiffest front. "You can't resist her—you get fond of her," a middle-aged Minister informed me, almost complainingly.

Her outward personal qualities contribute greatly to her popularity. She attracts immediately, because she is vivacious and friendly, but it is her perception and her cleverness that captivate the most discerning. She has,

too, a lively and sometimes candid sense of humour, with which she can turn aside an ill-intentioned shaft. When a party of United States senators visited Greece in April, 1947, one of them, who was apparently hostile to the idea of her expressing her opinion on Greek affairs as though she were a Greek, asked bluntly, "Madam, what were you born?" She answered immediately, "I was born a full-blooded barbarian, and I came to Greece to be civilised," an answer that at once brought the American to her side.

When she first arrived in the country to become Crown Princess, she came as a girl of twenty, full of enthusiasm, thinking she could put right in a few days problems that had baffled others for years. She is wiser now, but her enthusiasm has not weakened. Just as in 1940 and 1941 she overcame the prejudice that existed against her in some quarters because she was German, just as in South Africa she defeated the anti-monarchical attitude of the Greek Government, so she is now helping to overcome the country's difficulties, while at the same time trying to wipe out the unhappy heritage of the old political differences. Her impulse is to build for the future, and not to dwell on the misunderstandings of the past. An example lies in the relations between the King and Queen and the descendants of Venizelos, once the implacable antagonist of King Paul's father. The two elder Royal children, Crown Prince Constantine and Princess Sophie, held candles at the wedding of Venizelos's granddaughter. It is by a continuous succession of such actions that the Queen is showing her desire to help the King to open a new chapter for Greece.

It is not difficult to understand why the Queen is so well liked and admired. She devotes most of her interest, outside her immediate family life, to the succour of the distressed. The sincerity of her aim to help the country is recognised by everybody except the professional Communists. Ever since her marriage she has identified herself with Greece. Like Queen Sophie, she has embraced the Greek Orthodox Faith. She regards herself as a Greek, speaks to the people with the openness of a Greek, and is accepted by them as a Greek. She is full of creative

imagination and the impulse and energy to get things done quickly when the need is urgent. And her persistence and resolution are extraordinary.

Many of the things she undertakes in the course of her duties she does not like doing, but her courage and determination overcome all obstacles. She does not relish making public speeches in Greek, for example, especially extemporised ones, for although she speaks the language fluently, her command is not yet perfect in the formal tongue. Another of her dislikes is flying. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, she is so apprehensive of flying that each trip imposes a physical and nervous strain on her. Discussing this failing, the Queen told me that she could neither understand nor account for it. Every flight is thus a fresh ordeal, especially the take-off and landing. As soon as the plane lands, the Queen, still quaking, must pull herself together sufficiently to step outside with a pleasant smile, face the photographers, greet people cordially, inspect guards, and continue on a usually long and tiring succession of duties. In Greece the present lack of ground communications means that the only way the Queen can travel around the country is by flying, but she never allows her anxieties to deter her, although, as she is highly-strung, every effort takes great toll of her vitality.

The strength in her character that carries her through the recurring fears of flying is typical of the determination with which she approaches the task of helping to alleviate the sufferings of the Greek people. No action that she can take, within her constitutional status, to rally help, is left unexplored. She has herself come in contact with so much distress that her urge to assist has assumed something in the nature of a ruling passion. In conversation with the distinguished Socialist head of a British Economic Mission to Greece, the Queen, during dinner, spoke feelingly of the inequalities of wealth and poverty in Greece, and of how she was doing her best to help those in distress because everyone had a right to a reasonable standard of life. The British Minister exclaimed that he never thought he would ever sit at dinner next to a Queen and hear her utter Socialist views which he might have expressed himself. The

Queen replied that her views were not a matter of politics, but just those of a humanitarian.

And this is the attitude that shapes all her activities for welfare—the desire to help those who have suffered most. In her tours with King Paul to Macedonia and Epirus, her heart was touched by the plight of the thousands of children orphaned by the Germans and Italians, and their successors, the Communist guerillas. The Governmental machinery for taking care of these hapless youngsters exists, but it has many other tasks to do, and, like most official organisations, is hindered in its actions by financial red-tape and other regulations. The Queen decided to set the pace by voluntary action. She launched a nation-wide appeal for funds and voluntary workers in order to start camps and homes in which the children might be given the care, schooling and good food that it was impossible for them to receive in their villages, because of the general poverty and the continued depredations of the bandits. In a few days her first appeals had brought in the equivalent of £150,000. Within twenty days the first camp for 600 children, erected mainly by voluntary labour, was established and ready at Salonika.

Indicative of how the ordinary people respond to such efforts was the attitude of the sailors in a Greek naval vessel lying in Salonika harbour. They were asked to provide a volunteer working party to help construct the camp, and the first group of men went to the site a little suspicious that advantage had been taken of their good-nature. A day's labour with the other workers made them realise what the camp was for and why it was necessary. Full of enthusiasm, they returned to the ship and asked their officers if they could continue working at the camp until it was finished. But by now the remainder of the ship's crew had learned of the Queen's scheme, and they complained that it was unfair that they should be deprived of their share of helping. Eventually the crew was divided into shifts, which took turns on successive days in working at the camp. When all was ready, and the children installed, Queen Frederica went to Salonika to open it officially. I was permitted to accompany her, and later paragraphs of this chapter contain a description of the trip.

The success of the Queen's efforts inspired her to another worthy objective. She launched fresh appeals for adult victims of the guerillas, the destitute refugees from the area of operations. Broadcasting for help, she described the pitiful scenes she had witnessed. She presided at a meeting at the Palace, attended by representatives of all classes of the community and all shades of political opinion, except the Communists. Those with money gave generously. The leaders of the General Federation of Labour said that their members could spare nothing from their ordinary wages without hardship, but that they were ready to work on a Sunday, and to hand to the Queen's Fund all the moneys they received. Despite the organised protests of the Communist bodies, nearly a quarter of a million men and women worked through the Sunday, producing by their labours a sum equivalent to £75,000.

Similar offers of assistance for victims of the guerilla war came from other sources. The banks doubled the receipts from the Sunday workers. Disabled soldiers gave up a day's pension to the fund. Workers in the Athens area volunteered to work again on Sundays especially for the funds. A committee representing the stokers of the Greek Merchant Navy came to the Queen and offered her the money to buy several million cigarettes to be given to Greek soldiers engaged in fighting against the guerillas.

Such responses to the Queen's appeals in the name of charity and compassion demonstrate that Greeks will sink their differences under a leadership which they feel is sincerely determined to help the nation and the country, irrespective of politics. It is to be hoped that the lesson will not be lost upon those Greeks who have hitherto not always appreciated the unifying influence that a constitutional monarchy can confer in spheres other than social welfare. At present the Communist threat has caused the majority of the population to sink their past political differences and draw together under once-recalcitrant leaders. All these parties, whether Government or Opposition, acknowledge the inspiring and stabilising influence of the throne, and only the now illegal Communist Party, desiring neither peace nor unity, denies its merits. And

yet, although the King and Queen cannot penetrate into the inner dungeons of the Communist citadel, as represented by those who have been indoctrinated by foreign Powers into subversion and revolution, they have already breached some of the outer walls by their sincerity and goodwill.

For not all those who uphold Communism in Greece are guerillas, supported by foreign arms, and aiming to seize political power by force. Much of the professed Communism in the country was born of sheer misery and despair, the ground on which the Communist idea is most easily propagated, and which it is their technique to produce as a preliminary. Numbers of people in Greece have turned to Communism as a new political faith that offers an easy way out from the adversities of the past decade, but many of these dupes look upon the Communist organisation as merely another political party—something a little more to the left than Liberalism or Republicanism.

In touring Greece, both the King and Queen have always insisted, as previously described, on visiting Communist centres. Not all of their meetings resulted so well as the one at the tobacco factory at Kavalla, but all of them have thrown some light on the complexity of the Communist problem. One of the most illuminating incidents occurred at the village of Tumba, near Salonika, which was one hundred-per-cent Communist in its politics, but which gave the Queen a great welcome. The village was decorated for her visit with flags and flowers, and over a gaily adorned and inscribed archway hung three large portraits. On the left was Stalin, on the right Zachariades, leader of the Greek Communists, and in the centre, the Queen! The women of the village, dressed up in their Greek costumes and fineries, rushed close round the Queen, shaking hands and embracing her, many, in their emotion and excitement, kissing her and leaving the lipstick imprint of their lips on her cheeks. When she at last struggled clear, one of her party, a Minister, regarding her face and then her picture, exclaimed, “Madam, you are now truly the Red Princess.” Such a reception by a population that calls itself Communist, votes Communist, and yet acclaims

the Queen as "Our Princess", is a clear indication of the political naivety of the Greek worker and peasant. They cannot understand or believe that were the Communist leaders to obtain power, their first act would be to end the monarchy.

Another incident in which Queen Frederica took part occurred when, as Crown Princess, she was inspecting a Salonika hospital, where lay wounded troops from the guerilla war. She went round several wards, speaking a few words to each soldier, and was then shepherded towards the exit. "But what about the men in the remaining ward?" she demanded. "But they are prisoners, Your Royal Highness, captured in the fighting," she was told. "If they are Greeks, I will see them," the Princess declared, and in spite of warnings that she was risking an unpleasant demonstration, insisted on entering the ward. She stood alone at the entrance, and faced silence. Most of the men did not even look towards her. "I am your Princess, and I have come to see you," she said clearly, and waited. First one man and then another regarded her dubiously, then one started to clap, and instantly all who were able were clapping their hands in enthusiastic greeting.

Mistress of the situation, Princess Frederica walked farther into the room, and asked, "Are you all Greeks?" and was greeted with a chorus, "Yes, we are, Princess." The Princess continued mildly, "But how can you be Greeks, lying here, prisoners, after fighting against Greeks?" This they received in silence, then one man raised himself in his bed and cried, "Now I will never again forget that I am a Greek." From the remaining beds came other voices, with similar promises. The Princess withdrew amid loud handclapping, to be told that the men would probably keep their word, because most of them were youths of the villages who had been tricked or forced into joining the guerillas. Such men are reclaimable from the Communist influence. Others, more hardened and committed irrevocably to crime, cannot be changed.

Although such incidents are faced by the Queen with every air of confidence, they sometimes leave a reaction of enervation. Little less wearisome are the calls on her

patience and will, caused sometimes by inefficiency and indifference. Although she has the resolution to continue her efforts, it is possible that she would find the strain too great were it not for the King's help and encouragement. He agreed at once when Queen Frederica suggested that I should travel with her to Salonika, in order to see what was being done for the refugee children. I felt that his ready approval came partly from the feeling that the interest of a foreigner in her labours would give her pleasure. To me came the opportunity to see at close quarters the working day of a Queen.

The evening before the journey I was favoured with an invitation to dine with their Majesties. Arriving at the Palace at nine o'clock, I waited for some minutes in an ante-room. The Lady-in-Waiting appeared with an apology for the delay. She held a large sheaf of letters in her hand and explained that Her Majesty had only just finished checking her official correspondence. "Surely this is a very late hour to be toiling away," I exclaimed. "But it's the same every day. Sometimes we're much later than this," replied the Lady-in-Waiting with a wry smile. "These letters are all concerned with social welfare in some form. Some are replies to personal appeals to the Crown. But the Queen insists on seeing every one before it goes out, so we are all kept very busy." After this oblique on a Queen's self-imposed responsibilities, I went in to dinner, and it was during the evening that I learned of Queen Frederica's dread of flying. She tries to treat her fear lightly, and I suggested she might find the strain more supportable if, instead of sitting as a passenger, she were to travel part of the way in the pilot's cockpit.

I remained with the King and Queen, talking of the Royal flying and other experiences until two o'clock in the morning. At eight o'clock I was back at the Palace entrance, where I was met by Potamianos and other officials of the Court. A minute later the King and Queen emerged, followed by the children. They all greeted me in turn, the children coming to me and gravely shaking my hand. Dressed informally, the Queen looked fresh and glowing, in spite of the late session of the night before. The King,

wearing belted slacks and an open shirt and sandals, kissed her affectionately on both cheeks, then lifted her hand to his lips. The Queen and her lady-in-waiting, the Naval *aide-de-camp* and the rest of us, entered cars and drove off, the King and children waving good-bye. As the two cars pulled out of the Palace courtyard, with the sentry presenting arms in the British style, newly acquired from the training of the Military Mission, another car that had been waiting in the street outside slipped neatly in front of us and took up station behind the Queen's car. This contained the security guards.

We moved swiftly down the long avenue to Piraeus, then on to Hassani airport, where a party of officials and members of the Greek State Airlines greeted the Queen with cheerful faces and vigorous handclapping. The Queen had a smile and a word for each, although I knew well, from what she had told me the evening before, that her mind was on the ordeal of entering the plane and taking off. As she approached the Dakota she was presented with a bouquet by a uniformed hostess of the Airlines. We entered, and the Queen sat down with a subdued air. There were as passengers in the plane, in addition to the lady-in-waiting and A.D.C. and myself, the Minister of Welfare and his wife; Madame Melas, who is in charge of the work of the Queen's Relief Fund; an ex-Minister who controls its finances, and the head of the State Airlines. As soon as the engines started, the Queen sat stiffly upright. Fumbling with the fastening of her belt, she was helped by the Airline chief, who stayed by her seat and talked to her as the engines were tested near the runway, prior to take-off. But she was not listening to what he said. As the plane rolled forward, her hands gripped the arms of her seat, her face grew pale and apprehensive, and she sat rigid and motionless. We climbed unevenly in the bumpy air, and gradually her tenseness relaxed until she was once more able to take interest in what was happening. But she would not look through the window, and never did she regain her full vivacity and the ready smile that is so characteristic of her on the ground. Throughout the flight her ears were attuned to the roar of the engines, and any slight variation

of the note made her instantly alert, as did also any unexpectedly sharp movement of the plane.

After a time the Queen moved to the seat beside me and talked about the day ahead of her. But she was not very animated, and when we were photographed I had to ask her to smile. Then she decided to try my suggestion of sitting in the pilot's seat, and made her way through the narrow forward passage of the Dakota to the cockpit. I had imagined that seeing the broad panorama of the country ahead would help to calm her fears, but, on the contrary, she was at first much more disturbed. I wanted to photograph her, and so asked her to put her hand on the flying control grip. She shook her head firmly, but after a few seconds rested her hand on the engine controls. She turned and faced the camera with such a woebegone expression that I had to laugh, and told her that if she didn't smile the picture would suggest that she was sitting in a dentist's chair. Her sense of humour responded, and I caught a cheerful, unforced smile. With growing courage she stayed for a quarter of an hour in the cockpit, while I returned to the cabin and talked to the first pilot, an old Greek acquaintance, who, three years before, had flown me from Cairo to Naples in an R.A.F. Transport Command plane.

Eventually the Queen returned to her seat, and as we flew smoothly over the sea, felt sufficiently at ease to give her attention to the speech she was to make at Salonika. She read and re-read the papers and checked a paragraph with Madame Melas. This wise and kindly lady had won British esteem after the Athens fighting in January, 1945, when, as representative of the Greek Red Cross, she had visited E.A.M. and E.L.A.S. and helped to persuade them to set free their British and other hostages.

Then came the instruction to fasten belts for the descent, and again the Queen lost interest in everything and everybody while the plane dropped down and made an even landing. Pallid and inert, she sat passively in her seat while her belt was unfastened. Looking through the windows, I saw a Guard of Honour drawn up on the tarmac, with an imposing assembly of senior officers and

civilians waiting at the flank. The Queen left the plane, was met by the Minister-Governor of the Northern Provinces, M. Constantinos Rodopoulos, and submitted pleasantly to the photographers. Then she moved towards the group of civilians, who at once broke ranks and surrounded her while the Minister made introductions. Meanwhile the officers remained stiffly in their appointed place. The Queen passed along the Guard of Honour, shaking hands with the officers, and speaking to a few men, and then entered a car waiting at the other end. The group of senior officers still stood to attention, but now looked, I thought, a little glum. I entered a car which took station behind that of the Queen, but as we drove off her car stopped. She had noticed her previous omission. She descended from the car, spoke to the officers, now all smiles, and then set out for Salonika, several miles away.

News of the Queen's arrival had obviously not yet reached the city, and so the long convoy of cars passed along the streets without the people realising what it signified. When we arrived at the Minister's Residence, however, a small crowd, mostly of women and girls, was waiting to give their Queen a welcome. We stayed for a time in the Residence, which was on the edge of the bay, where from the water projected the remains of several sunken ships. Soon we set out for the camp, which lay some miles away, in the hills to the west of the city. By now a larger crowd had gathered, the news of the Queen's presence having spread around the town. Along the streets people stood on the pavements, smiling and clapping their hands. In the villages along the road to the camp, the population turned out in full force, although obviously nothing had been organised in the way of a formal reception.

At length we entered the hills, for the most part entirely barren, and drove up into the tree-splashed valley, where lies the village of Oraokastron, from which we had a magnificent view of the whole of the Bay of Salonika. Outside the village, chosen for its good water and its coolness, had been erected a hutted camp, and here was

waiting a large crowd that included several scores of British and American officers and troops and civilians from the military and other missions in the area.

Passing under a flower-decked archway, the Queen was presented with a bouquet by young girls, who read her a long address. Meanwhile we watched several hundred men, women and children lined up in a large semi-circle. At first everything was orderly and everybody held to their places, but as the Queen moved forward to the flagstaff and table where waited the priests who were to conduct the religious ceremony, gradually the various groups of children, villagers, Scouts and spectators moved forward until at last the Queen was the centre of a seething but good-tempered crowd of people.

After a prolonged religious ceremony, the Minister said in the course of a ten-minute speech, “To-day, by the side of the King, the Queen stands ready to soothe the suffering and succour the needy through the welfare services of the country. When better days come, history will confirm the conviction of all Greeks to-day that we have a Queen worthy of our highest traditions and deserving of our love.” Addressing words to the orphan children, he consoled them for the sadness that destiny had brought them, and promised that “never will care and trouble be branded on your foreheads as it is on ours to-day. And when you live happily with your children you will remember that you owe your happiness to your Queen, who so deeply felt your needs, and who stood by your side as a godmother for you all.”

The Queen then read her speech. By this time she had been standing for an hour and a half, without sun-glasses, in the full heat and glare of the sun, and although closely surrounded by a mass of people, including several hundred restive children, her voice reached unfalteringly and clearly to the whole crowd. The speech, which had been written by the Queen, was simple and direct, and drew continued applause. I was struck by some of her phrases. She pointed out that it was only three weeks ago since she had called on all Greeks, but especially the Athenians, to help their brothers in Northern Greece, and that in that short

time the necessary money had been provided and this camp built. "Only three weeks!" she exclaimed. "That does not amaze me, it only makes me proud."

"The people of Athens are at your side," she continued. "Every blow that you receive is a blow to the soul of Greece. . . . The unity which we show in preparing this camp is the unity by which Greece can carry herself clear of the present tragedy." Then she spoke feelingly of the children in the camp. "Whichever of these children are orphans must never feel it. I especially tell you that they are *not* orphans. They are the children of all of us. All Greeks must surround them with tenderness and care." Finally she named the camp.

"I name this children's community Saint Irene,* because we all desire peace, and because that is the name of one of my children. As I love this child of mine, so do I find love for all the children of Greece."

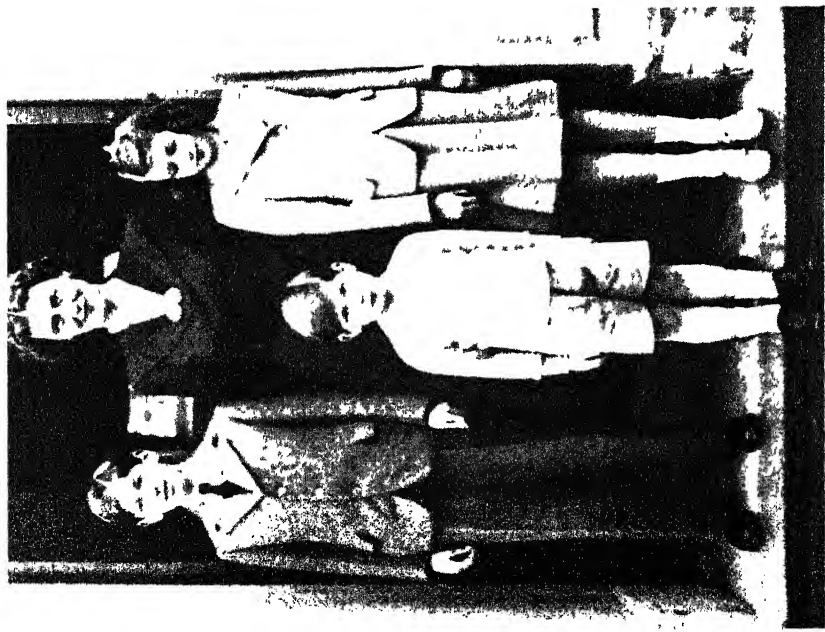
The speeches completed, the Queen posed for photographs with groups of officials and children, then made her inspection of the camp. By this time all attempts to keep control of the crowd had been abandoned, and it was with difficulty that her party—the Minister, Madame Melas, the lady-in-waiting and the A.D.C., with myself as additional member—were able to keep close to her. She passed through the huts and inspected the blanket and other stores, the baths and water supply, the dining-tent and then the kitchen. Entering here whilst scores of people stood gazing through the open windows, she recognised one of the cooks. "He was with us in Cairo," she explained to me, waiting while he hastily rubbed his hand on his apron before taking hers. Grinning from ear to ear, the cook showed us the meal being prepared, and the Queen tasted it amid murmurs of approval from the crowd.

By now the sun was at its height, and surrounded as we were by several hundred people, the atmosphere became decidedly stifling. Outside the cookhouse, waiting for the Queen, was a couple carrying a sickly-looking child. At once they spoke to her, pointing to the child and becoming more and more excited as the Queen called to one of her

* Irene means Peace.



Princess Katharine and Major Richard Brandram
after their marriage at the Palace in Athens, with
the Crown Prince and Princesses Sophie and Irene



*The Duchess of Kent, with Prince Edward, Duke of Kent,
Princess Alexandra and Prince Michael*



The Duchess of Kent

entourage to note their request. This was another demonstration of the right previously mentioned of all Greeks to make a personal appeal to their King and Queen. The child had tuberculosis, and the parents wanted it to be taken into a home. “There are unhappily very many thousands of them,” the Queen told me, “as a result of the war years. We just don’t know how to help them. All the T.B. hospitals are full, and there is a long waiting list.”

Finally the whole ceremony was over, and the excited children with their short-cropped hair and specially made clothes were assembled for their midday meal. At last the Queen received farewells, and we left the camp. It was two o’clock before we returned to Salonika and assembled with the Minister to take a well-earned aperitif. I felt that if I had earned mine, merely by watching, the Queen deserved hers twice over. Then we sat down to a pleasant luncheon, and after a short rest the Queen prepared for her next duty—the presentation of diplomas to the voluntary and other nurses of the Salonika Hospital.

After receiving a succession of local personages, the Queen started out for the hospital. We entered a large hall full of nurses and their relations. First came a few speeches, then the Queen presented diplomas to the successful probationers. The ceremony took at least another hour. As we left, a small crowd watched from the pavement opposite where the Queen’s car waited. Again I witnessed an appeal to the Crown. Suddenly a woman in widow’s mourning ran across the road, avoided the guards, pressed through the people surrounding the Queen, and started pleading with her. A policeman tried to move her, but the Queen restrained him with a gesture. As the woman’s emotion grew and the tears ran down her face, the Queen’s brows gathered in a frown. She called to her side an official, questioned him and gave him instructions. Satisfied that her complaint would be looked into, the widow bent and kissed the Queen’s hand gratefully and moved away.

We returned to the Governor’s residence, where the Queen took a short rest. Just before six o’clock we drove back to the airfield, where another Guard of Honour

awaited inspection. At length, the official ceremony over and the farewells spoken, she sank into her seat in the aeroplane. I said good-bye to her, as I had to stay at Salonika in order to go next day to the northern frontiers. The Queen already looked exhausted, but she had an hour's enervating flight still in front of her, and then the role of hostess at an official evening party in the Palace. I felt that by the time she reached her pillow that night, her working day would have been longer and more strenuous than that of most of her subjects.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PATH OF HARMONY

THE Minister for Security, M. Zervas, had arranged for me to visit Florina and other centres of the guerilla war, and by the kindness of the Air Minister, M. Kanellopoulis, I was provided with air transport by my old friends of the Royal Hellenic Air Force. Flying first to Larissa, we continued northwards over scenes of the 1941 fighting, across the broad valley of the Aliakmon River, and then up towards the famous Florina gap. We flew low over villages that had recently been sacked by the guerillas, and saw how individual houses had been picked out for destruction, their burnt-out shells surrounded by others untouched.

At Florina and elsewhere I was given facilities to talk to some of the guerillas who had lately surrendered under the last prolongation of the general amnesty. Out of a score of men, only five admitted to having joined the rebel bands voluntarily, the others saying they had been forcibly recruited while working in the fields near their villages. Some acknowledged taking part in raids on villages for supplies, but, as was to be expected, none would admit having shot or injured anyone. Several had taken part in marches across the borders into Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in order to collect arms and ammunition. Three had received special training in Yugoslavia at the camp at Bulkes. One had been allowed to visit relations north of Belgrade. Another of the men had ranked as an officer, and he explained the way in which the guerillas were organised and controlled on military lines. He said it was difficult for men who wished to surrender to do so, as, if their intention were detected, they were immediately shot. I learned little from these men that has not already been made public, not only by the Press, but also by the United Nations Balkan Commission, which was finishing its labours in

Salonika whilst I was there. I did, however, gain the impression that offers of amnesties to the guerillas are not in the least likely to produce an end to the fighting.

As well as talking to the bandits, I spoke to representatives from several of the nearby villages that had been attacked. Priests, old farmers, housewives, young labourers, girls, all told the familiar tale of sudden raids, the murder of gendarmes and known anti-Communists, and the usual accompaniment of rape and robbery. One woman wore bandages on her arm as a result of bullet wounds received a few days before. A girl of about seventeen, who lived on the outskirts of Florina, had been mutilated by the bandits when they had failed to find her brother, a gendarme.

She told how, late in the evening, on answering a knock at the door of her parents' cottage, armed bandits entered and demanded her brother. She told them that he was out, and without further ado they set fire to the building, forcing the girl's parents to remain inside. Meanwhile, to the sound of firing and the cries of women, similar scenes were taking place in the adjacent cottages. Struggling free from the men, the girl tried to put out the flames, but she was seized again, the upper part of her clothing torn away, and a breast cut off, despite her screams. Then the guerillas fled, as troops arrived from the barracks at the other end of the town. Unable to believe at first that any men could behave so barbarously for no reason, I asked which breast had been mutilated. She hesitated for a moment, then, so that I could see for myself, drew her flimsy blouse tight across her body.

I looked at this young creature—an ordinary village girl, fresh and clean and tidy—as she went on to tell me how she had been taken to hospital. She spoke in short, nervous sentences, but without self-pity. The other victims of guerilla action, who already knew her story, stood grouped around the desk where I sat, and eyed her without expression. As I listened, I thought of the senselessness of the tragedy that had befallen her because of this Communist madness. I had been shown photographs of some of the atrocities perpetrated by the guerillas in this

part of Greece, including the crucifixion of a priest outside his village shrine, and the bestial mutilations of both men and women, including one terrible picture of a disembowelled pregnant woman. All these photographs, although they made my blood run cold, did not affect me as deeply as the sight and proximity of this young girl, so savagely maltreated at the blossoming of her youth. I could not understand by what fiendish impulse the Communists were impelled to such abominations, and I thought of certain peculiar people in Britain who, although they regarded the sadistic brutality of a Heath-type murderer in their own country as punishable only on the gallows, could publicly tolerate similar brutalities by guerillas as merely passionate political gestures—just being “tough”, as one British writer, a Member of Parliament, expressed it.

I could well understand the resentment felt by many Greeks at the attitude of some foreigners to the sufferings which they were undergoing. I thought of how violently some of these people in Britain, writers in ultra-respectable papers as well as politicians, would react if force were used in their own country by any political body to rob them of their liberties, and yet how smugly they support subversive and revolutionary action abroad. These same people, whilst knowing that the guerillas are inspired and maintained by Communist officials in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, have yet denied to the Greek Government its right, and indeed its duty, to defend the integrity of the national frontiers, and the rights and properties of its subjects.

In 1947, a British body calling itself “The League for Democracy in Greece” announced that eighty-six Members of Parliament had telegraphed an appeal to King Paul, expressing a “profound sense of horror at what is happening in Greece to-day”, and begging him to reprieve rebels for “alleged political offences”. The Greeks were baffled to understand why the sympathy of these doubtless well-meaning people should not be given to the victims of the attacks, rather than to the armed criminals who commit them under the banner of Communism. As a Greek paper wrote, the appeal had been sent to the wrong address, for it should have gone to Moscow. Why, asked a Greek

friend, does not a group of British parliamentarians form a "League for Democracy in Russia"?

Such interferences in the internal affairs of Greece were given great prominence in Communist papers, and acted as a direct incitement to violence. It is not always understood in Britain that despite the Communist war in the North, the Communist leaders and their newspapers in Greece had complete liberty to express their seditious views until their actions were made illegal at the end of 1947. This freedom was abused to the extreme. Every criticism of Government action by foreigners was seized on and exaggerated, and made an excuse for further excesses. These papers deliberately and recklessly stirred up old hatreds with provocative and inflammatory writings, that not unnaturally provoked angry reaction among those who were against the Communist doctrine. British public men and newspapers did Greece a grave disservice when they provided material for these journals to exploit.

Even if the threat to Greece came only from the Northern frontier, the task of maintaining order would be difficult enough, but the mountainous terrain enables the guerillas to operate everywhere. Practically all these men belong to the Communist organisation, and their work is controlled from outside the country. But banditry is an old industry in Greece, and some of those in the Communist ranks would in normal times have been dealt with as the criminals they really are.

I had an indication of the widespread activities of the guerillas while flying around Greece, when I was taken over some of the centres they are known to use, including one in the hills south of Mount Olympus and others in Morea. Although we flew very low we were not fired upon. The object of the Air Force in these trips is to induce the bandits to expose their positions, but this information is not always of value unless acted on at once, as the bands are very mobile and move easily from one district to another, existing on the proceeds of their robberies.

When I flew to Crete and landed at Maleme airfield, I had to wait for an escort to take me and my two Hellenic

Air Force companions to Canae, as local bandits had raided a village just north of the airfield the previous evening. The hour's run to Canae completed without incident, I visited the Governor of the island, and drove without an escort to the village of Perivolia, just north of the town. From here we proposed to see the house belonging to the Cretan, Captain Bolanis, who had given shelter to King George and his companions before they started their journey over the White Mountains in 1941.* I had hoped to speak to Bolanis, but learnt he had been killed, not by the Germans but in an accidental shooting. The Governor had lent me his car, with a pennant, and as we entered the centre of the village, its tiny square faced by a typical wine shop-cum-café, I noticed several armed figures disappearing down side passages. The Governor's chauffeur, a sergeant of the gendarmerie, had seen them, too. Greatly excited, he jumped out of the car and flung angry questions at the people standing near. They answered with expressive shrugs of the shoulders, pointing to the glasses, still half full of wine, on the tables outside the shop. We did not see Bolanis's house, after all. Instead, the driver, after further wrathful imprecations, climbed hurriedly into the car and drove furiously back towards Canae.

Meanwhile the two Air Force officers, looking none too comfortable, explained that a group of bandits had been in the square as we drove up, and that, seeing the Governor's car, they thought we were the spearhead of an attack on them. Had they stayed, we should have been in an awkward position, as, except for the sergeant's revolver, we had not a gun between us. The Air Force officers particularly would have had a thin time, for the guerillas have announced that because of the damage they had suffered through Air Force operations, any Air Force men captured could expect a particularly unpleasant time before being killed.

The driver stopped at the first telephone, and shortly afterwards a lorry full of troops passed us on its way to the village. Bandits had never been so near to Canae before, hence the surprise and the alarm. The incident afforded

* See p. 96.

me a convincing personal demonstration of the difficulties of providing protection against these bands, and of the size of the force required to deal with them adequately over so wild and difficult a terrain.

The drain that this burden throws on Greek man-power can be readily assessed by comparison with the problem in Palestine. Here 100,000 British troops were needed to deal with a couple of thousand Jewish terrorists. At the time I was in Greece there were, according to M. Souphoulis, over 20,000 rebels near the northern frontiers, in addition to small bands scattered throughout the country. It was clearly an impossible undertaking for 100,000 Greek regulars and some 30,000 gendarmes to deal with so many armed men in a country so much larger and more mountainous than Palestine.

The problem was being attacked by developing local volunteer defence forces, and since my visit these organisations have been greatly expanded, so releasing troops for active operations in the North.

The guerilla war is indeed a war, and Greece is a battlefield. Here is not the "cold war", but a hot and bloody miniature of the possible conflict between Western democracy and the Communist form of totalitarianism. As in the past, Greece is the unwilling pawn of the Great Powers, not now only in the matter of politics, but of ideologies.

In efforts to bring the fight to an end, generous amnesties were offered to the rebels by a succession of Greek Governments, but, as already indicated, most of the guerillas are hardened criminals who dare not surrender, and the others "desert" at the risk of their lives. But even if it wished, E.A.M. is not permitted by its foreign masters to compromise with the Greek Government. Its terms for putting an end to the fighting, which in effect require the surrender of the State, were that British and American missions should be withdrawn and that all key posts in the Government should be occupied by Communists. Such demands show that E.A.M. do not seek peace. It is their object to keep Greece in a state of poverty and terror until they achieve their ends.

Fortunately the situation is now only too clear to the

world. Russia wishes to control the whole of the Balkans in order that she can more readily subjugate Turkey and Italy. If Turkey falls, Iraq and Persia are in Soviet hands, and that means the end of British and American influence in the Middle East. That is why the Americans are wisely trying to sustain both Turkey and Greece. All true Greeks welcome the American help, for within it lies the possibility that their country may be able to shake off the guerilla millstone, and devote her energy to building up the peace and prosperity that will provide the best antidote to Communism.

With this object, nearly all the political parties have sunk their differences in order to face the danger that threatens the liberty of the State. Government and Opposition alike are united on every major issue, all of which resolve from the subversive policy of the Communist Party. This unprecedented political unity is consolidated by the universal acceptance of the Crown as the key-stone of the national structure. For if Greece is the last bastion of democracy in the Balkans, the monarchy is its strongest battlement. All reasonably minded men acknowledge this condition, and it is to be hoped that under the sheltering wing of the United States, the country will eventually find a formula for securing the contentment of which it has so long been deprived.

There is even hope that when present dangers are over, lessons will have been drawn from the political harmony that most of Greece is now showing. It may be hoped that politicians of the future may moderate their personal ambitions, and that the Army has learned not to interfere in political matters. The Greeks will no longer have to be "handled like naughty children", as the situation was described to me in reference to the national blend of worldliness and naivety. Greeks will learn to accept discipline voluntarily in order to preserve their freedoms. Instead of being practically a national industry, politics may find its proper place in the social structure.

Greece may then become a democracy in the true sense of the word, where every man will insist on his neighbour's right to freedom as well as his own, and where all political

groups will, under the unifying influence of the throne, work primarily for the well-being of the country. In this nation of free men the King will be, as King Paul was described by M. Sophoulis, "the first democrat". No longer will a veil be thrown over the personalities of the King and Queen, for they will mix with their people as they are doing now, and belong to them. Thus will the dynasty of King George I, after a rough passage among stormy seas, arrive at its haven. Then will the throne, secure in the esteem and affection of all the people, assume its proper place in the structure of the State.

This much may reasonably arrive in Greece, provided she retains her freedom. But for those members of the dynasty, whether rulers or princes or of lower degree, whose paths have led them among other nations, some of which have already lost their freedom, the future is less promising. Who shall say, for example, whether the Monarchy will ever return to Roumania? How remote is the chance that Queen Alexandra will ever wear the Yugoslav Crown in Belgrade? Will Princess Olga ever return to her White Palace? Will other members of the family who have acquired Italian and German nationality ever resume their semi-regal state? The onthrust of new political and social orders seem to offer, at the best, only a remote uncertainty.

Many of the family have already recognised this situation, and have settled down to ordinary lives, free from the old and so often unrewarding responsibilities. For apart from the uncertainty of Kingship, they share the view of Prince Christopher, that the heavy responsibilities and almost complete surrender of private life suffered by a King and his family constitute a sacrifice that, under modern conditions of government, is too great for most people to endure. Prince Christopher, who died suddenly in Athens in 1939, was offered the throne of Portugal and afterwards those of Lithuania and Albania, and firmly refused them all. He wrote in his *Memoirs* that "nothing under the sun would induce me to accept a kingdom. A crown is too heavy a thing to be put on lightly. It has to be worn by those born to that destiny, but that any man should willingly

take on the responsibility in these troubled times, not being constrained by duty to do so, passes my comprehension."

Thus we see those who suffered tragedy, exile and tribulation in the past, because they were of a princely house, entering on new and more satisfying lives as ordinary citizens. King Constantine's sister, Marie, for example, widow of the Grand Duke Mihailovich, married the Greek Admiral Peter Joannides. Her daughter, Princess Xenia and also Princess Marie, the daughter of her sister, Princess Alexandra, took up their lives as ordinary citizens in the United States. Princess Françoise, widow of Prince Christopher, has lived quietly with their son Prince Michael, in Morocco and France. Prince Peter is engaged in a long lecture tour in the States, and plans on its completion to set out on another exploration to Tibet. And Princess Katherine has found her fate, not in the Courts of Europe, but in the ranks of the British Army.

For romance came to Princess Katherine after a life that, since girlhood, has been full of movement, excitement and drama. Her almost gypsy existence started as a tiny child when she accompanied the father who adored her, King Constantine, into his first exile. Then came other exiles in Switzerland, Italy and elsewhere, with a period of schooling in England at North Foreland Lodge, and finally the long spells in Florence with her mother, and following Queen Sophia's death in 1932, with her sister, Queen Helen. After a trip round the world in 1935, during which she visited Hollywood as an ordinary tourist, but had to leave precipitately because of the efforts made by publicity men to persuade her to accept a screen offer, she returned to Europe, moving to Greece in 1936 with her sister Irene. Here she occupied herself in social and welfare work until the evacuation in 1941. Her period of exile in South Africa has already been described.

She met her husband on the *Ascania* in 1946, when she was sailing for England to join King George, after her last period of exile in Egypt. Many friends from Cairo were on board, and one of them introduced Major Richard Brandram. After dinner they again met, and Princess Katherine promised the tall and gallant Britisher that he

should sit and talk to her on deck next day. But for the rest of the voyage the Princess was sea-sick and saw nobody ! They met again for a few minutes at Liverpool, and had time to arrange for a luncheon in London. Three weeks after their first encounter they became engaged, but in giving his permission, King George insisted that the event should be kept a secret until the unsettled situation in Greece had become resolved.

The engagement began on July 17th, 1946, but was not officially announced until February of the following year. Princess Katherine returned to Greece with her brother in September, 1946, and Major Brandram to his work with the British Mission in Iraq, where he had served for nearly three years. A Cambridge man and a rugger player, he was a Territorial before the war, and is now a regular officer in the Royal Artillery. He served in France at the opening of hostilities and went through the evacuation from Dunkirk. Afterwards he took part in the invasion of Sicily, and later of Italy, and was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry at the Garigliano River. He was wounded at the Minturino Ridge, leaving his division when it was at Anzio. His remaining overseas service included action in the Madagascar invasion, and visits to India, Persia and Syria.

The wedding took place in Athens on April 21st, three weeks after the death of King George II. The two services, the Anglican and the Greek Orthodox, were held in private in the ballroom of the Palace, Princess Katherine being given away by King Paul.

Among the many wedding presents received was a marriage dowry of £10,000 subscribed by all ranks of the Army, Navy and Air Force, which did not forget that Princess Katherine was their godchild. Another present was brought to her in her room just before the wedding ceremony, where she was waiting in her bridal array for her brother to escort her to the ballroom. An aged lady-in-waiting, Madame Contostavlos, entered the room and handed her a small jewel-case. Inside was a diamond bracelet and a cheque for the equivalent of £4,000—her present from the gendarmes of the whole country. Princess

Katherine was very affected by this gift, for it was made at a time when the gendarmerie, who had already endured much for their loyalties in the past, were suffering many losses from the murderous attacks of the guerillas on their isolated posts in the mountains and countryside. Placing the bracelet on her wrist, the Princess wore it at the wedding a few minutes later.

Madame "Messie" Contostavlos also took pleasure in this incident, for she had known Princess Katherine since the day she was born. Originally lady-in-waiting to Queen Sophie, she had served the family through all the vicissitudes of the past fifty-eight years. Her death shortly afterwards at the age of ninety was felt as a deep personal loss by every member of the Royal Family.

Among the relations and friends who took part in the religious services were Prince Constantine and his sisters. At the end of the ceremony Prince Constantine suddenly started to cry, and when asked why, said he didn't want his new uncle to take Auntie Katherine away. However, he was persuaded to recover and join in the groups for the wedding photograph, one of which is given opposite page 256.

Many messages of goodwill were received by Princess Katherine and her husband, but the ones they regarded with especial appreciation came from those who knew her well, although they had never seen her—men of St. Dunstan's Hospital, who had met her in South Africa when she acted as escort for the blind "Tombani boys".

As already recounted, the couple spent their honeymoon at the house of Colonel Levidis, and then, after a few days in Athens, went to Bagdad, where Major Brandram again took up his duties. For a time they lived in a bungalow at Alwiyah, Princess Katherine finding Bagdad hot but full of friendly and interesting people. In Greece, Princess Katherine retained her rank and nationality by special decree, but when she returned later to England she came officially as a British subject. It was decided by His Majesty King George VI that she should rank in this country as a daughter of a duke. Thus she became the Lady Katherine Brandram. It appealed to her sense of

humour that, as part of the legal process of relinquishing the status of a King's daughter in order to assume that of a Duke's daughter, she had to pay £25 in fees to the College of Arms !

Through the King's gesture, Princess Katherine thus followed the example of her cousin, Princess Marina, in assuming British nationality and title through her marriage with a Britisher. But the two Princesses were not the only members of the Greek Royal Family who were to lose their own rank and become endowed with a British title. Yet another member, Prince Philip, was to forge a double link with Britain, winning his nationality by his war service, and his British title as the husband of the heir to the British throne.

CHAPTER XVIII

TO BRITAIN COMES A SON OF HELLAS

Writing in his memoirs of the dramatic happenings that followed the abdication of King Constantine and the seizure of power by the Military League revolutionaries, Prince Christopher told of the family tension created by the arrest of his brother, Prince Andrew.

"I went straight to Paris, where I found my mother and my sister Minnie worn with anxiety over Andrew, whose so-called trial was just drawing to its conclusion. Day after day we waited for news in an agony of suspense. Reporters besieged us every hour, clamouring for interviews. . . . The trial ended on a Saturday. All the night we sat up waiting for the news of the verdict, but none came. The next morning my mother, wan and haggard, went to the Russian church to pray. At ten o'clock the telephone rang. My hands shook so that I could hardly lift the receiver. It was a reporter, a *New York Herald* man. 'Your brother is to be exiled, not shot,' he told me.

"My sister and I drove at top speed to the church. My mother was just coming out. The colour drained from her face when she saw us, and her hand flew to her heart. 'He's safe, he's safe. It's all right,' we called. She turned back towards the church, made the sign of the cross and burst into tears. . . ."

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The Revolutionary Committee that forced King Constantine to abandon the throne to his son George had also, as previously recounted, seized the Commander-in-Chief and five Ministers whom they accused of instigating the Asia Minor campaign. They summoned Prince Andrew from Corfu on the pretext of giving evidence at the trial, but as soon as he arrived in Athens he was arrested and

placed in solitary confinement. He was cut off entirely from his friends and relations, and Prince Christopher was reduced to the artifice of sending messages on the cigarette papers used by Prince Andrew's valet, who was the only one of his household allowed to visit him.

Both General Plastiras, the leader of the revolutionaries, and his colleague General Pangalos, then Minister of War, were openly determined to have all the prisoners executed. Pangalos had served in the same class as Prince Andrew during their military cadet training, but seemed to harbour a special animosity for his fellow student. The newly ascended King George was powerless to intervene, as he was kept in virtual confinement in his Tatoi palace. But appeals were sent by Prince Andrew's mother and others, to London, Paris, Madrid and Rome, which made representations to the revolutionaries for moderation. Personal emissaries set out for Athens from King George V of England, the King of Spain and the Pope. Learning of their approach, and determined not to allow foreign influence to interfere with their purpose, the revolutionists took the six men from their cells to the prison courtyard, lined them up against the wall and shot them without proper trial, without even giving their victims time to prepare themselves for death.

The emissaries arrived a few hours after the executions. Prince Andrew's trial continued, on a charge of having disobeyed orders while commanding the army's right wing—a professional red herring introduced by the two rebel generals. But the presence of the foreign representatives, and the world's indignant reaction to the executions, made the revolutionists think twice about taking Prince Andrew's life. His wife, Princess Alice, then under police surveillance at her home, *Mon Repos*, in Corfu (where Prince Philip was born), had left her family and gone to Athens, at considerable personal risk, to be near her husband during his trial. After his release the two left the capital under the protection of the British emissary, Commander Talbot, once naval attaché in Athens, and joined their family. Leaving behind in Greece everything they possessed, they made their way to London and then to Paris.



Princess Alice with Prince Philip at the age of three.



Prince Philip at the age of seven, with a friend



Prince Philip with his sisters, Princesses Marguerite, Sophie and Theodora, on the occasion of Princess Sophie's marriage



Prince Philip at Gordonstoun School.

*The Marriage of Princess Elizabeth and the
Duke of Edinburgh in Westminster Abbey*



The mortifying ordeal through which he had passed left a deep feeling of bitterness with Prince Andrew. His wife, too, could not forget the strain of those anxious days of waiting for the worst in Athens, at a time when her own safety and that of her family was also uncertain. They both remembered the previous stormy days of King Constantine's struggle against Entente pressure, when, after internecine street-fighting in Athens, and the naval bombardment, they had returned to their house to find that stray bullets had entered the nursery while the children were there. They decided that they had had their fill of Greek politics, and settled down on an estate at St. Cloud, near the French capital.

Prince Andrew, unable to forgive the way in which, after long years of honest military service, he had been subjected to public insult and indignity for the sins of others, made up his mind that his son Philip should not be committed to the risk of similar outrage. With Princess Alice's full agreement, he decided that Philip should be trained for another life. In 1929, at the age of eight, Prince Philip came to this country, and went to a preparatory school at Cheam in Surrey. He made his home with his grandmother, the Dowager Marchioness of Milford Haven, and with his uncle George, Marquess of Milford Haven, elder brother of Lord Louis Mountbatten. The Marquess's son David, Earl of Medina, was also at Cheam.

In 1934 Prince Philip went to a school at Salem, in Baden, Germany, run by Professor Kurt Hahn, a German educationist of progressive and unorthodox views. A year later, ejected by the Nazis, Hahn set up his school at Gordonstoun in Morayshire, and here Prince Philip remained until 1939. The school curriculum was devised to give effect to Dr. Hahn's doctrine of developing personality and individual sense of responsibility. Sailing and seamanship were among the subjects considered good for character-training, and thus Prince Philip was able to enjoy working on one of the subjects that interested him most. Apart from regular small-boat sailing on the Moray Firth, he made long trips in the sailing ship *Prince Louis*, one to Norway and others to the Hebrides and Shetlands.

One of Dr. Hahn's measures was to encourage pupils to participate in the life of the town and neighbourhood. Prince Philip was thus given the opportunity to meet all types and classes of people, and to work with the folk of the countryside—fishermen, gardeners, boat-builders, foresters. The effect of such training during the malleable years are apparent to-day in his frank and natural approach to every sphere of life around him. "He overcame the disadvantages of his royal birth," as his friends put it. In his work and conduct he showed unusual response to his preceptors, becoming head of the school as "the boy with the strongest sense of service". He also developed his athletic prowess, becoming captain of cricket and hockey before he finally left Gordonstoun.

In 1938, on the death of the Marquess of Milford Haven, Prince Philip's father asked Lord Louis Mountbatten to act *in loco parentis* for him, and it was then that Lord Louis began to show the personal concern in his young nephew's affairs that probably helped to determine the future. The tradition of the sea had come to Prince Philip from his grandfather, Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg, first Marquess of Milford Haven, who as First Sea Lord had contributed greatly to the Navy's readiness at the outbreak of the 1914 war. The call of the sea was thus already in Prince Philip's blood, but the closer contact now established with his sailor uncle undoubtedly stimulated his interest in the attractions of a naval career.

While the Greek Royal Family was in exile, the young Prince had held firmly in his mind the need to prepare himself to earn a living, and after the restoration of the monarchy in Greece he decided to join the British Navy, with a view to transferring later to the Hellenic Navy. Too old to enter the Navy direct when he left Gordonstoun, he sat for the competitive special entry examination, being placed sixteenth among thirty-four entrants.

In 1939, at the age of 17½, he joined the Royal Navy as a Special Entry Cadet, and although he suffered, like the others of his term, under the disadvantage of competing with boys who had entered Dartmouth direct from preparatory school, he more than held his place on

the self-reliance, intelligence and judgment that his previous instruction had given him. Throughout his cadet training Prince Philip held his ascendancy, and was awarded the King's Dirk as the best cadet of his term and the Eardley-Howard-Crochett Prize as the best all-round cadet of the year. This successful taste of British naval background, together with the outbreak of war, changed his plans for an eventual transfer to the Greek Navy. He decided that his future lay in the British Navy, and tried to obtain British nationality, but found all action blocked for the duration of the war, with the result that he held a commission in the Royal Navy for six years without being a British subject.

During his first two years in England, Prince Philip usually spent his holidays with his family at St. Cloud, but in 1931 the home there was broken up when his four sisters, all of whom possessed more than their share of good looks, were married. The first to leave the parental roof was the youngest, Princess Sophie, who was only sixteen years of age when she became the wife of Prince Christian of Hesse. Next Princess Cecile married Prince George of Hesse-Darmstadt, son of the Grand Duke. Princess Margaret was the next to wed, her husband being Prince Godfrey of Hohenlohe-Langenburg. Finally Princess Theodora married the Margrave of Baden. During the next few years the young Prince spent most of his holidays with his sisters and parents and other relatives on the Continent.

In 1937 Princess Cecile, together with her husband, her two children, and her mother-in-law, was killed in a tragic flying accident at Ostend, while on her way to attend her brother-in-law's wedding in England.

The outbreak of war cut off Prince Philip entirely from his family. Princess Sophie was widowed in 1943, and the occasion of her second marriage at Lake Constance in 1946, to Prince George of Hanover, brother of Queen Frederica of Greece, brought about the first family reunion for nine years. But one other figure besides Princess Cecile was missing from this gathering, for Prince Andrew died in 1944, at the age of sixty-two, when living at Monte Carlo.

In January, 1940, his training as a cadet completed, Prince Philip joined his first ship, the battleship *Ramillies*, then at Colombo. The *Ramillies* went to Australia to fetch the first troop convoys, but when she came to the Mediterranean, Prince Philip had to leave her, as he was still a neutral, and she was now in an area of active operations. When Greece entered the war he was in South Africa serving in H.M.S. *Shropshire* at Durban. He was promptly drafted to *Valiant* in the Mediterranean, and two days after he had joined she took part in the Battle Fleet bombardment of Bardia for the opening of Wavell's first advance into Cyrenaica.

Two months later he had his first taste of a naval action. An earlier chapter has briefly described the events that led up to the Battle of Matapan. Admiral Cunningham's dash across the Mediterranean, the delaying action of carrier-borne aircraft and of bombers from Crete and Greece, the vigorous chase in the darkness, the confusion of the enemy—all these things are now known to history. The key action of the battle was the night encounter by the British battle squadron with a division of Italian cruisers. In five thrilling minutes the battleships *Valiant*, *Warspite* and *Barham* blew the Italian cruisers *Zara* and *Fiume* to their complete destruction.

Fleet Tactical Orders allotted to *Valiant* the duty of illuminating enemy targets. Radar gave the first warning of the approach of the enemy ships, which were returning south-eastwards, presumably to try to aid the cruiser *Pola*, crippled by previous air bombardment. The destroyer *Greyhound* was first to light up the enemy. An instant later *Valiant's* lights were on the targets, which she kept illuminated for the remainder of the action. In charge of a section of the *Valiant's* searchlight control was Midshipman Prince Philip. In so swift and deadly an engagement, illumination of the enemy ships played a vitally important role, and the accuracy of the gunnery—three-quarters of the thirty-odd rounds fired by *Valiant* were direct hits—testified that the task was efficiently done. For his share in this good work, Prince Philip, then still under twenty years of age, was mentioned in Admiral Cunningham's despatches, and also awarded the Greek War Cross.

In June, 1941, Prince Philip, and other midshipmen due for promotion, left H.M.S. *Valiant* and returned to Britain. They travelled by troopship round the Cape of Good Hope, stopping *en route* at Capetown. Here Prince Philip saw his cousins, King George and Prince Paul and the Crown Princess Frederica. The journey continued across the South Atlantic to the West Indies, and then up to Halifax. During this trip a strike of Chinese stokers gave Prince Philip and his companions a chance to widen their practical experiences of seamanship by acting as volunteer stokers. At Halifax, Canadian troops were embarked for the final stage of the journey to England.

Prince Philip next achieved the ambition of every young naval officer, to serve in a small ship—a new one for preference, of course, but, failing that, an old one. He spent the next two years on the Home Station in an old ship, the 1918 class destroyer flotilla leader *Wallace* of the Rosyth Escort Force. Promoted sub-lieutenant in February, 1942, Prince Philip served in that rank on East Coast convoys until July, when he was promoted lieutenant, and re-appointed to *Wallace* as her Second Lieutenant. In the following October, when the First Lieutenant was transferred to another ship, Prince Philip was, at the request of the captain, appointed to the vacant post. He became at the age of twenty-one the youngest officer in the Navy to hold the responsible position of executive officer in a ship of the size of the *Wallace*.

In May, 1943, there came a break from the never-ending East Coast convoys, when *Wallace* was one of the many ships chosen to take part in the invasion of Sicily. She was withdrawn suddenly from the comparative quiet of Rosyth, and sent to Scapa Flow for frantic preparations and practices. From then on she was engaged in escorting convoys of vessels that were eventually to participate in the Sicilian invasion. July found her at Malta, and from here she helped to cover the landings of the Canadians. During the night journey from the island, a violent storm seemed to promise inevitable failure in the morning, but as the invasion fleet approached Sicily the gale abated, and when

the vessels arrived off-shore the sea was perfectly calm. After the strained expectation of the night before, the initial landing operations, which were unopposed, came in the nature of an anti-climax to Prince Philip and his ship-mates, as they no doubt did to others engaged in the operation. But their immunity did not last long. Enemy bombers appeared, and the invasion vessels were subjected to many fierce assaults. *Wallace* was lucky, as she was attacked only once, when three German dive-bombers gave her their attention for nearly half an hour. There were several near misses, but no damage was done.

The duties of the destroyers consisted mainly of patrols against "E" boat activities, and of providing smoke-screens round the anchorage when the situation demanded. This work lasted about ten days, when *Wallace* went back to Malta and resumed escort duties. She returned to England in September, 1943, and Prince Philip was posted from the ship in November, when she was paid off for a major refit.

After well-earned leave and several courses, he was appointed in February, 1944, as First Lieutenant of the new destroyer *Whelp*, then on the point of completion in the builder's yard. To be selected as second-in-command of one of the newest classes of destroyer was a great compliment for so young an officer, but was logically the normal consequence of his two years' successful experience in *Wallace*. The new ship was commissioned in May, and after a few months of training and miscellaneous duties, set out in August from Glasgow for the Far East. The *Whelp* went first to Portsmouth, from where she escorted H.M.S. *Ramillies* to Algiers and afterwards to the Straits of Boniface, preparatory to the invasion of the south of France. This duty complete, *Whelp* continued *via* Malta and the Canal to Ceylon. On arrival at Trincomalee the ship joined the 27th Flotilla with the Eastern Fleet under Admiral Somerville, who was very soon afterwards relieved by Admiral Fraser. Later, *Whelp* became part of the British Pacific Fleet, under Admiral Fraser, when Prince Philip found himself serving at last under the command of his uncle, but at rather remote range, for Lord Louis

Mountbatten was now Supreme Allied Commander, South-East Asia.

Whelp took part in a series of operations closely integrated with the widespread plan of attack on Japan. After a visit to Australia, she joined the naval forces carrying out diversionary attacks on Japanese-held islands while the Americans laid siege to Okinawa. During these operations the fleet was subjected to many air attacks by Jap suicide pilots, but these were usually directed against the big ships, and H.M.S. *Whelp* escaped their attention.

These strenuous duties over, the ship went to Melbourne in February, 1945, for refit, afterwards acting with H.M.S. *Wager* as escort to H.M.S. *Duke of York*, flagship of Admiral Fraser, on a journey to Guam to visit Admiral Nimitz. Whilst at Guam news came through of the atom-bomb attack on Hiroshima, swiftly followed by intimation of the end of the Pacific War. Still escorted by *Whelp* and *Wager*, the *Duke of York*, and the *Missouri*, flagship of Admiral Halsey, were the first Allied battleships to enter Japanese waters. The two flagships spent some weeks in Tokio Bay, where on September 2nd the Instrument of Surrender, which applied to the whole of Japan and all her home-based forces, was signed on board the *Missouri*.

H.M.S. *Whelp* remained in Tokio Bay on various duties for several weeks, then went on to Hong Kong, where Prince Philip and his shipmates took an enthusiastic part in the V.J. celebrations that signalled the end of active service. Then in October, 1945, the ship was relieved, and after a visit to Sydney, returned to Portsmouth in 1946. During the last two months of *Whelp's* commission, Prince Philip was placed in command while she was reduced to reserve status.

So ended a five-year tour filled with excitement, experience and responsibility. By the age of twenty-five Prince Philip had seen service in all the oceans, had taken part in several important operations, had watched the abject surrender of a cruel enemy, and—not the least important in the eye of a keen young sailor—had held a brief command. His service had gained him the Atlantic and Africa

Stars, the Burma Star with the Pacific rosette, the Italian Star and the Victory Medal. His Greek awards included, in addition to the War Cross, the Order of the Redeemer, second class, and the Order of St. Constantine and St. George, fourth class, with swords.

After a period of leave, to which reference is made in the next paragraph, he was appointed to H.M.S. *Glendower*, the new-entry training establishment at Pwllheli, and when this unit closed down three months later, was selected as an instructor in H.M.S. *Royal Arthur*, the Training School for R.N. Petty Officers, at Corsham, Wilts. At such a school, which dealt with hand-picked men who had already seen active service, an instructor would make little headway unless he himself possessed ability and character. Prince Philip's high reputation as an instructor, among both his pupils and the fellow-members of the staff, left no doubts about his possession of these qualifications.

Not long after Prince Philip's return to England the public became alive to the interest that existed between him and the heir to the British throne. He and Princess Elizabeth had first met at the Coronation in May, 1937, when he was sixteen and she eleven. From 1939 onwards they kept up a casual correspondence, but it was not until the summer of 1946, when Prince Philip spent his leave with the Royal Family, that the world grew alert to the possibility of a Royal Romance. In September reports of a coming engagement were circulated from Athens, but this rumour, like others that followed, was officially denied.

The difficulties that face any young couple prominent in the public eye, who wish discreetly to discover and confirm a mutual attraction, are great enough; but for Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip the situation would have been both embarrassing and tiresome had not each fortunately possessed a sense of humour. Every private meeting, every appearance together in public, every exchange of glances caught by a camera, raised a fresh crop of speculations. Seldom can a young couple have carried out their wooing under such public scrutiny and comment.

Then began the inquisitions of the Press, the discussions whether Princess Elizabeth should marry a man of foreign

birth, and especially a member of the Greek Royal House, which was then occupying a delicate position in the international scene because of the foreign-provoked schisms in troubled Greece. Some papers asked what Russia's reaction might be, and suggested that Britain would be suspected of "another move in the world of power politics". One newspaper even held a poll on the desirability of the marriage, the answer being well in the affirmative.

Eventually the native common-sense of the British public asserted itself. Proper significance was given to the way in which Prince Philip's boyhood in Britain and his service in the Navy had qualified him for British citizenship. People realised that Their Majesties the King and Queen were best fitted to decide on the question. Eventually, too, it was recognised that the match would be one of mutual affection and understanding, which was the chief criterion. As *The Times* neatly put it, after the engagement was announced: "The pleasure of the people will be the greater because it is apparent that there can have been no motive but the impulse of their own hearts to bring this young couple together. By a happy accident the Princess has bestowed her hand in such a way that two apparently divergent opinions about the qualifications of her consort are simultaneously satisfied—the opinions of those on the one hand who would wish him to be a British subject, and of those on the other who consider royal blood essential."

Although it may be assumed that it was in 1946 that confirmation of the attachment between the Prince and Princess was recognised in the Royal Family, no action could then be taken to announce an engagement, because Prince Philip had yet to gain British nationality, and the position of the Greek monarchy was still in the indeterminate phase between the election and the plebiscite. As long ago as 1944 Prince Philip had, in pursuance of his aim to become a British naval officer, renounced his claims to the succession of the Greek throne, but the procedure of obtaining British naturalisation could not be completed until February, 1947, the delay arising in part because

Prince Philip insisted that no special priority should be given to his application. His British citizenship was granted in the normal routine as a consequence of his honourable record in the Royal Navy, just as it was granted to other foreigners who established their loyalties by their actions in the fighting services. The Greek Royal Family possesses no surname, and so it was natural that Prince Philip should adopt the family name of his mother and uncle. But he was probably intrigued to read in *The Times*, on the day after his assumption of British nationality, a leader which pointedly referred to "Mr. Mountbatten".

After several supposedly inspired confirmations of the engagement, discounted with decreasing firmness from Buckingham Palace, the official announcement of the King and Queen's approval finally appeared in the *Court Circular* of July 9th, 1947, and became front-page news throughout half the world. Both Prince and Princess were "featured" in numberless newspaper and magazine articles, some of which purported to divulge their innermost emotions. Their life-stories were illustrated with photographs from infancy that no doubt caused Prince Philip some moments of embarrassment with his brother officers. But the country learned at once to know and appraise him as Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten, R.N., the name which he would have been proud to bear all through his Naval service had circumstances permitted.

Thousands of photographs have familiarised the world with Lieutenant Mountbatten's appearance. His height gives him distinction, but also a slimness that is deceptive, for he is strongly built, virile and manly. He has a firm, well-featured face, especially bold in profile. His hands are strong, and the big-boned fingers interlock and flex as he sits, elbows on knees, when engaged in pensive conversation. Some suggest that he resembles the late Duke of Kent, not so much in his features as in his figure and movements. Others that his personality reflects something of that of Earl Mountbatten.

To me, it was interesting to compare him with his cousins, King Paul and Prince Peter of Greece, and his second cousin, King Michael. In the matter of physique he shares

the height of King Paul and King Michael, but there the resemblance outwardly ceases. While he obviously possesses many of his cousins' deeper characteristics, his manner of displaying them has something they do not share. He gives an impression of mature self-confidence that is unusual for his age, but which is quite different from the unconcerned air of authority of that other sailor, King Paul. He has the naval man's friendly directness and readiness to share a joke, but does not show the sudden glimpses of warm and melting good humour that lighten King Michael's normally impassive calm. He has the worldly acumen and discrimination to be expected from his background and experience, but they are different from the easy, reflective comprehension of Prince Peter.

At first I could not discover where lay the key to these differences and distinctions, but eventually I realised that it was because Prince Philip showed not the slightest sign of being a foreigner. It is not only that his English *is* English, and not the perfection often acquired by foreigners. There is an even more significant attribute. As I listened to the incisive but unaffected intonation, the frank explicit statement, the cheerful familiar phraseology, I recognised them. I perceived that his talk, his humour, his point of view, his liveliness, his restraints, were those of scores of young officers of my acquaintance, the types with whom I had been familiar for most of my adult life in the Royal Air Force. He is, in fact, exactly what his service background declares he should be—a typical British officer of the best type, with the decisive and confident, yet not assertive, bearing that comes of several years of living close to other men and commanding them, of passing through the hazards of war, and of seeing life in its grim as well as its pleasant aspects.

In living as a Britisher from boyhood, passing through first his formative schooling and then the crucible of the Royal Navy, Prince Philip has become so firmly stamped in a traditionally British mould that it is difficult to realise he is of foreign birth. He seems to have acquired even the instinctive inhibitions and limitations of the typical Britisher, including the disinclination, or inability, to reveal himself,

except to intimates, beyond a certain conventional line. Yet he has nothing of aloofness in him. On the contrary, he is at ease in any company. Moreover, he does not forget old friends and acquaintances, of every circle in life, as some of his invitations to the wedding showed—a barman from Cannes, and an American war-time “godmother”, for example.

Personal contact gives the impression of a firm and, indeed, determined character, showing through a façade of good-natured normalness. All his school and service training has helped to develop pronounced qualities of leadership, which, in spite of himself, perhaps, he cannot help showing. One senses that he is well aware of his own mind, and that he is fully conscious of the importance of his coming obligations. He knows that Princess Elizabeth has been preparing for many years to perform her duties both as Heir to the Throne and as Queen, and that he has much to do and to learn if he is to give her the support she needs. His position is one of grave responsibility, but his career has shown that he already possesses the character to accept responsibility with confidence and distinction.

Lieutenant Philip Mountbatten remained a commoner for only a short time. On the afternoon of November 19th, the day before the wedding, he knelt before his future father-in-law, His Majesty King George VI, in the ceremony of the accolade of Knighthood. The King touched each shoulder with a sword, and invested him with the insignia of a Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. The King then conferred on Sir Philip Mountbatten the titles of the Duke of Edinburgh, Earl of Merioneth and Baron Greenwich. Finally, His Majesty authorised the use of the prefix “His Royal Highness”, which meant that once more, among his intimates, the young British naval officer had become Prince Philip, but this time not a Prince of Greece and Denmark, but of Great Britain. Many years had passed since the title of the Duke of Edinburgh had last been in use, for the previous holder was that Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Alfred, second son of Queen Victoria, whom in 1862 the Greeks had vainly asked to occupy their vacant throne.

That same evening Prince Philip attended his last bachelor party, a lively all-naval affair at which his uncle, Earl Mountbatten, was also a guest. In the streets outside, along the short route to be followed by the wedding procession, spectators had assembled since four o'clock in the afternoon. By the time the new Duke returned to his bed at Kensington Palace, where he was staying with his grandmother, the Dowager Marchioness of Milford Haven, most of the advantageous positions along the processional route had already been taken.

From daylight onwards, when the tubes and buses brought in people from the suburbs, the crowd thickened rapidly, until they had gathered into a great multitude, especially dense in Trafalgar Square, outside Westminster Abbey and opposite Buckingham Palace. In spite of the dull weather, their spirits were high, for they welcomed this break in the grey austerity that now enveloped Britain, even though they knew that compared with previous Royal festivals, the commemorations, coronations and jubilees of pre-war days, this celebration had, by the wish of the King, been deprived of most of the pageantry that would have surrounded it had times been less hard. Yet the occasion was a rare one, much more so than most of the watchers realised. For the last opportunity given to a London crowd to witness the marriage of an heir to the throne was in 1863, when Edward, Prince of Wales, wedded Princess Alexandra, sister of King George I of Greece, and great-aunt of the new Duke.

As the time for the wedding grew near, the crowds saw and cheered the bride and her parents, the bridesmaids, the Royal relations and others taking part in the ceremony, as they passed on their way to Westminster Abbey. Here, too, in this ancient building, the embodiment of English history, collected the many guests and other foreign Royalty and people of distinction, as well as the nobles and notables of Britain. Six Kings and seven Queens were among the nearly 3000 people who shared in the impressive ceremonial, among them Queen Frederica of the Hellenes, chief representative there of the bridegroom's dynasty.

Outside, the waiting throng heard, as did all those listen-

ing by their radio sets in Britain and throughout the world, the solemnisation of the wedding. So were millions able to listen to the responses of the bride and bridegroom, the Prince's "I will", low, but strong, the Princess's, faint, but sure. To many must have come memories of the broadcast of the wedding of Princess Marina thirteen years before.

Then came the return of the now married couple between wildly cheering crowds along Whitehall and the Mall to Buckingham Palace, followed by the King and Queen, and Queen Mary, and the principal foreign and other guests. The excited concourse waited patiently while the wedding breakfast was celebrated and the cake cut with the sword once worn by Prince Philip's grandfather, Prince Louis of Battenberg. Then followed the appearances on the famous balcony, and the frantic upsurge of mass enthusiasm as the Prince and Princess, the King and Queen, and the other members of the wedding party, showed themselves and responded to the emotion of the people.

Among those who came to the balcony was Princess Andrew, mother of the bridegroom. Who shall say what thoughts went through her mind as she watched the great legion that acclaimed the son she had given to be the husband of Britain's future Queen? Did her memories perhaps reach back to those grim hours in 1923 when she had waited in Athens to learn her husband's fate? Did she think of all the difficulties and sadnesses that had followed those fateful days? And did she now, perhaps, seeing the happiness about her, remember the consolation of counting one's blessings?

Among the assembly of Royalty brought together by the wedding, the members of the Greek dynasty, in all its ramifications, formed a formidable proportion. Queen Frederica had left King Paul in Athens ill with typhoid fever, but the bridegroom could still see around him a gathering of his family that lacked chiefly his three sisters, all in Germany.

During the next few days it was my privilege to meet most of these members of the dynasty, and to talk with them on both the past and the future. Princess Eugénie, who had brought her two children with her; her mother,

Princess Marie, with her still beautiful face and clear, warm voice; her father, Prince George, tall, slim, his long white moustache emphasising his likeness to his father, King George I; the Lady Katherine Brandram, looking forward to a great event, and then afterwards to the roving life of a British officer's wife; Queen Helen, elegant and gracious, and her sister Irene, Duchess of Aosta, tall and handsome; King Michael, dignified and unassuming, clearly enjoying the unaccustomed feeling of being a free human being; and finally Queen Frederica, relieved for a time from her busy routine, joining a wedding-night party at a London club, receiving prominent London Greeks and others, and managing also to include a quick visit with the Duchess of Kent to her parents in Germany. Coming to England she had travelled in a Greek destroyer, and so avoided flying, but the journey back was made with Field-Marshal Smuts in his own aeroplane. Even in London the Queen's mind was on her responsibilities in her own country. She spoke to me at once of the work of her Relief Fund, of how since my visit to Greece, ten camps for orphans had been opened, and of how her appeals for aid had brought wide response from all levels of the Greek community.

Although King Michael openly showed his pleasure at being with his relations and friends in a civilised atmosphere free from the restraints and intimidations of the other side of the Iron Curtain, he was burdened with his anxieties over the ill-omened developments in Roumania during his absence. He realised the full implications of these events, as did his Roumanian and other friends and adherents in London. By almost everyone, he was advised not to return to Bucharest, because the whole pattern of Russian control of Eastern Europe was inevitably shaping to the abolition of the Roumanian monarchy. He met several prominent public men including General Smuts, Mr. Churchill and Mr. Bevin, and their advice indicated concern for the young King's personal safety.

King Michael went to Switzerland on November 30th, and for some time discussed the situation with members of his family. He took the decision to return to his country, and the Queen insisted on accompanying him. They

showed much courage, for they could not know what lay before them, and whether, indeed, they would be allowed to leave Roumania if things went wrong.

They arrived in Bucharest on December 21st, and the King lost no time in asking Groza to explain the meaning of the Ministerial appointments and other acts taken without the Constitutional authority. He declined to confirm the appointment of Bodnaraş to the War Ministry. Groza was non-committal, for he had not then received instructions from Moscow on how to handle the situation created by the unexpected and unwanted return of the King. The next few days passed in an uncertain tension that arose ostensibly from the unfavourable attitude of the Government to the King's proposed marriage to Princess Anne of Bourbon-Parma. But this matter possessed no real importance, for the dramatic episode that followed was a deliberate step in the policy of ruthless elimination of all possible centres of opposition to Communist control in the Soviet satellite States.

On the evening of December 29th, the King and Queen were asked to meet Groza next day, as he had an important personal intimation to make. At midday on the 30th, Groza presented himself at the Kyselef Avenue Palace, accompanied by M. Gheorghiu Dej, one of the chief members of the inner circle of Roumanian Communists. Groza informed the King that he had come to demand his abdication, and passed a document which he required should be signed without delay. King Michael read the paper, which was a Declaration of Abdication, ready for signature, and phrased in humiliating terms.

He protested resolutely against being stampeded into an act that so vitally affected the people of his country, as well as himself. Argument continued until the King learnt that the building was surrounded by troops of the Tudor Vladimirescu Regiment, men who had been persuaded to Communism while prisoners of war in Russia.

King Michael asked what would happen if he refused to abdicate. Groza replied that if the document were not signed at once, the King would be held responsible for the bloodshed that would follow action already ordered.



King George and Queen Elizabeth followed by Queen Mary, Princess Alice, Queen Frederica, King Michael and other Royalties leaving Westminster Abbey after the wedding



*Prince Philip and Princess Elizabeth,
Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh*

At length King Michael realised he had no alternative but to submit to *force majeure*, and signed the Act of Abdication.

By evening groups of people assembled in the Kyselef Avenue and began "spontaneous" demonstrations. Well drilled processions went round the streets, shouting alternately "Long Live Stalin" and "Long Live the Republic". Banners with republican inscriptions were quickly unfurled. Royal Arms over public buildings were replaced by republican letterings. But in order to avoid disturbances in the country the Government in radio announcements took care to explain and emphasise that the King had abdicated voluntarily, because he wanted to be free to enjoy life, and because he realised "the Monarchy was an impediment to the future development of the State". The King was not then in any position publicly to refute these misrepresentations. Until his aunts, the Princess Elizabeth and the Princess Ileana, Archduchess of Hapsburg, and her family had escaped, his lips were closed. It was only after he had arrived in London on his way to the United States that he was free to repudiate the abdication, and to declare his determination to continue to work in the service of the Roumanian people.

In his triumphant announcement of the abdication, made in Parliament a few hours after the event, Groza blandly stated that the Government thought it their duty to accept the King's renunciation of the throne. The Communists had staged the farce of accepting a not unwelcome offer, but in fact they had, without a referendum or any pretence at normal parliamentary procedure, deposed the King under threat of personal injury to himself and the Queen Mother. It was significant that the first notification of the abdication on the Bucharest radio was in Russian—the "action completed" report to Moscow! Afterwards followed another statement in Roumanian.

To ensure that the Army gave no trouble, Bodnaraş at once dismissed ten Royalist generals and filled their places with pro-Communists. The men of the Army, puzzled by their King's supposed proclamation, were sworn without incident to allegiance to the new Republic.

The next few days passed in packing the scanty possessions that the King and his Mother were permitted to take, and in destroying letters and other personal effects. The Government paid a small sum for produce from the Royal estates, but accounts of their having paid or promised large sums to the King were far from the truth. Indeed, the Communist officials seized and retained money left by King Michael for the payment of the Palace servants.

Although the tone of the Bucharest announcements was not hostile to the person of King Michael, the attitude of individual Communists who had to deal with the Royal Family was usually one of sneering discourtesy. When the Royal Party left Sinaita in the special train provided for them, the Government troops studiously avoided paying military honours. On this note of calculated disrespect ended the 66-year old period of the Dynasty.

Meanwhile the Government assumed the functions of the Royal Prerogative, and took over the legislative power. The Roumanian Peoples' Popular Republic was proclaimed, and so the Communist aim became realised, for the few score Communists who had been in Roumania at the time of King Michael's *coup* before the Russians entered in 1944 were now its dictators.

Premier Groza broadcast a New Year's Eve message promising support to Greek guerillas, and spoke of "the heroic struggle of 'General' Markos against foreign imperialists and their Greek agents". His words showed that the Cominform line-up was complete. Roumania would take her place in the Balkan structure for Russian aggression towards the Mediterranean, and their objective now was Greece.

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After the Royal Wedding, Queen Frederica had returned to her country full of courage and hope for the future. Before many days had passed came the guerilla attempt to seize Konitza. King Paul was still unwell with a fever, probably contracted during an official visit to some malarial district. The Queen resolutely took his place, flew to the area of operations, visited troops and hospitals, bestowed

decorations. Again she showed her determination to help her husband to consolidate the position of the monarchy as the keystone of the Greek national spirit and sentiment.

At the same time came the news of King Michael's dethronement and the alignment of Roumania with the Communist guerillas. Moscow's plans for "direct action" were now open and declared. Only Greece remained to resist her ambitions, and of the dynasties that had once ruled over the Balkan countries, only the Royal House of Greece survived. More than ever before had the Greek throne become the symbol of national independence; more than ever before had it unified Greece against the dangers of a new servitude.

The future for Greece is uncertain. Western civilisation cannot afford to let her succumb to the Communist invader, for if Greece falls, then the values that she represents will be near extinction. Greece cannot stand alone against Russia and her satellites. Only American aid can help her to resist the increasing pressure against her northern frontier.

But if this danger can be overcome then the prospect for Greece may be stronger than her past, for she may have learned something of the virtues of unity. When peace is sure there is hope that the stabilising influence of the throne will help more than any other factor to heal wounds that have come not only from the external enemies, but also from the insidious internal dissensions that have opened the gate to the invaders. To-day the traitor is still there, trying to admit foreign domination, but from the point of view of the true Greek spirit, the future is brighter than it has been for many years. The new King, strong, sagacious, impartial, and his Queen, radiant, compassionate, inspiring, together offer to Greece a long spell of harmony in domestic affairs. Once the present menace from without has passed, it can surely be only the fault of the Greeks themselves if they do not profit from the lessons of the past to make sure of their well-being in the future.

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